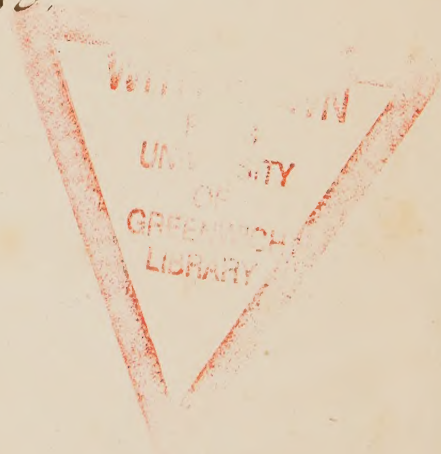




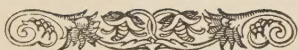
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with Antiquarius' love.

Feb. 5. 1880.



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# BEETHOVEN

DEPICTED BY HIS CONTEMPORARIES




*"The consciousness of life  
well lived, makes music  
at midnight."*

*George Herbert*

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# BEETHOVEN

DEPICTED BY HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

BY

LUDWIG NOHL.

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“The age needs strong souls.”—BEE THOVEN.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

EMILY HILL.

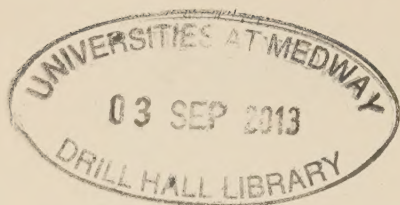
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To the Master of Masters,  
RICHARD WAGNER,  
BAYREUTH.

HONOURED MASTER,—

In the spring of 1865, when I had scarcely any conception of the nature of your artistic achievements, I dedicated to you—and I had an express purpose in so doing—my “Letters of Beethoven.” You thus replied—

“You must have known what you were doing in dedicating this book to me; you must have known that you would offend that large class who constantly labour to impress the public with the idea that I despise our musical classics. Neither can you be ignorant of the reasons sought in support of this foolish notion; I, therefore, accept your dedication as a declaration of opinion, and offer you my best thanks.”

In the summer, *Tristan* was produced.

I was impressed by the tragic nature and lofty style of this marvellous dramatic creation ; but I knew little of the profundity of its ideas, and the surpassing superiority of its artistic expression.

Two years later, on one of those innumerable journeys undertaken for the purposes of my "Biography of Beethoven," and the expenses of which were chiefly defrayed by public lectures—I came across a book of yours, that I was already slightly acquainted with, but in which I had never expected to find more than I possessed in your other writings. It was entitled "Three Opera Librettas, with a letter to his friends," and was sent to me by an ex-military bandmaster at Oldenburg, after a lecture on "Richard Wagner."

Anyone entering my room when I was reading it, would have been greatly astonished at seeing a mere book produce such an effect on a man long passed the inflammable period of youth, and to whom time had taught most of the lessons of life, and revealed most of its experiences. Never since the nights devoted to Shakespeare and Goethe, and the sunshiny hours spent with Beethoven, had I experienced such a convulsion of feeling ; never had I seen such a reflex of my own thoughts, or felt endowed with such clearness of vision. I confess that, as when reading *Faust*, I often buried my face in the book in a flood of tears, and paused long before I could proceed, such



were its pictures of psychological development and of superabounding life,—

“In wilden Leiden erwuchs er sich selbst.”

Thus we afterwards saw described in a word that spiritual growth presented in this book with such startling directness. He whom Wotan yearns after, who, having conquered himself, has overcome the world; he who forges his own sword; he who slays the dragon of every dead form, and awakens the true and lovely form of life and art—he stood forth more clearly in that perfection of his existence, than when in the midst of the hard and bitter struggle.

Soon followed the *Meistersinger*.

What *Tristan* could not accomplish by ideal beauty, and perfect freedom of poetical and musical expression, this work, passing beyond the limited sphere of historical narration, was able to perform by its sovereign mastery over all things, even over the most unpoetical forms and means of art. A practical examination of the case showed me that one who had advanced thus far, who had followed the different composers into their own especial domain, and with a light touch reproduced their characteristic features and caught their “style,” must be absolute master in an art which is in its nature as utterly removed from mere mechanism, as it is in its technical elements unique,

“Da wusst ich wer der war”—

and following the sure leadings of this penetrating

spirit, I soon ascended with ease those sunny, joyous heights of art, where all is free, creative, pristine life—*Tristan* and the *Ring des Nibelungen*.

How shall I speak, my dear master, of the hours, days, months, and years which have since passed over my head? What are the "Wallhalla delights" (Wallhalls Wonnen) of theoretical speculation, where thinking becomes realising, and the thought itself a deed! If it be a great and lasting happiness to have been permitted in the fresh, receptive years of youth to mature the mind with the highest things in life, art and ideality, how infinitely more blessed is the unexpected advent of a second spring, and of a life-giving, ripening summer, such as I then experienced. All the conceptions of poetry and of life which I had received from Beethoven became transformed; they glowed and sparkled with animation. But I had also passed beyond mere feeling, and attained to a clear mental conception of this Beethoven, whom I had indefatigably toiled after, with many sacrifices, for more than ten years.

With the celebration, in 1870, of the centenary of our master's birth came your book "Beethoven," which a hundred years hence will still remain the noblest monument of this artist's character and work. In 1872 we first heard of "Bayreuth." Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was the firm and fitting cornerstone of this unparalleled undertaking, and *in hoc signo vinces* was then, if ever, the truest of prophecies.

"May he but live till the mighty, lofty problems of his spirit be fully solved," exclaimed one of the most appreciative of his admirers to Goethe; and how could this "mighty, lofty problem" of Beethoven's spirit be more fully grasped and elucidated than in the achievements of Bayreuth? Although prevented by an accident from assisting personally in this noblest of our master's fêtes—noblest, because it displayed most directly the living principle of the master's career—I was not debarred from being present in spirit at this first scene of the "act." And now the "prodigious deed" has been accomplished which brought the master everlasting renown, but about which it be- seems us, who took loving share in it, to be silent.

Having experienced such emotions, such a revolution in all our thoughts and feelings, can we fail to sympathise, heart and soul, with the work and its author? With this candid and detailed explanation of my reasons, I pray you to accept the dedication of this little book, which is a direct continuation of "Beethoven's Letters."

After the conclusion of "The Life of Beethoven," and when this depiction by his contemporaries had just gone to the press, a friend, who had shared in the Bayreuth festivities, exultantly showed me "an interesting letter of Richard Wagner's." And what did I learn from it? That you, my honoured master, had, if I may so express it, been my predecessor, and that you had almost forestalled me in my life's task.

For, this letter, dated "Paris, May 7th, 1841," contained a plan for a biography of Beethoven, which was perfectly matured and on the point of being executed. I feel that I cannot do other than quote the most striking passages as an additional proof of the manner in which Richard Wagner "despises the musical classics."

Feeling the urgent necessity that the world should possess a faithful likeness of its highly honoured teacher, the composer of *Rienzi*, at that time twenty-seven, said of Schindler's Biography, which had just appeared, that "every thoughtful and feeling reader found it far from fulfilling what had been expected of it." "Besides," he continued, "apart from its miserably piece-meal character, this book does not afford any clear view of the artistic life of the great tone-poet, and the writer for the most part contents himself with a confused description of what he discerned from his own limited point of view." Nevertheless, the manner in which Schindler's work was received showed what interest the German public would take in a really good biography. "Beethoven had been his constant study," continued the young hero of the opera, "and he trusted that his pen might prove not altogether unworthy of so inspiring a theme; he had therefore acceded to the proposal of a fellow-countryman of Beethoven, living in Paris, and who had for some years been collecting materials, to write a joint biography of Beethoven." He thus more fully describes the scheme—



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"It is proposed that our life of Beethoven, which is to form two volumes, be written in a somewhat imaginative style, suitable to the subject, and that it give an accurate and complete survey of the material and artistic career of the great master. Avoiding all display of pedantry, the book is to be an art-romance rather than a chronological narration of events and anecdotes, but nothing is to be admitted that has not been verified with the most scrupulous care. In its historical part, it is to give a detailed description and discussion of the great musical epoch created by Beethoven's genius, and the spirit of which was diffused by his works over all future productions. At any rate, our book is to be the finest and most complete work on Beethoven it is possible to produce."

Such was the clearly defined plan and purpose of an adequate biography of Beethoven.

We now know that notwithstanding "the noble object of the undertaking," you had a higher mission to fulfil than that of writing such an "interesting work." Soon after, through the influence, no doubt, of the well-known *littérateur*, Hofrath Theodore Winkler, of Dresden, *Rienzi* was first brought out in that city, and the brilliant career of this dramatic creation thus inaugurated. And now, with the quiet earnestness of the man who knows how to estimate the difficulties of every independent action, you find that the biographical scheme has met with a reception beseeeming its serious purpose, I beg you to look not

unkindly on such a fulfilment of your intentions as is afforded by "Beethoven nach den Schilderungen seiner Zeitgenossen."

Of the book itself I have little to say.

It does not become me to state publicly what was its immediate practical object; to me it was of the utmost importance, as it gave me the means for visiting Bayreuth, a circumstance which only serves to raise the value of the book in my estimation.

Schindler surely made direct reference, more than thirty years ago, to a work like the present, in one of the supplements to his book—the descriptions of Beethoven in Nos. 29 and 35. "A collection of such sketches would," wrote Schindler in 1841, "be one of the most interesting publications of the day. From the variety of descriptions of the immortal tone-poet, the reader would have the privilege of choosing one most congenial to his fancy. On one point only would they all agree,—in an admiration and reverence for the master, which would atone for all other diversities of opinion."

When I referred to these remarks I was indeed greatly surprised that during the period which has since elapsed, and which has brought to light so vast a number of such descriptions, it had not occurred to any lover of Beethoven to make a similar collection. You will believe me when I say that Schindler's observations were not the determining cause for the compilation of my work, the idea of which was

brought before me by a fortunate necessity. At the conclusion of the "Biography," which had been a long work of years, I took a broad survey of the rich artistic nature depicted therein, and the importance, not to say necessity, of a compilation like the present flashed upon me, and I saw, if chronologically arranged and carefully elucidated, how wonderfully it would enhance the value of the biography and published letters of Beethoven.

Outward circumstances, and an object to be fulfilled thus equally impelled me to the execution of the plan. As if there were some latent charm in the mere collection or rather natural chronological sequence of these sketches, there flowed through the apparent diversity of these descriptions a fresh life, not only a natural rhythm and spontaneous movement, but a flood of inherent vital activity; while the key-note of all is the truly tragic character of Beethoven's whole nature. The musical biographer will one day collect such descriptions by his contemporaries of Meister Wagner; and very applicable to the life, work, and spirit of one so immeasurably above the ordinary standard, would be the lines which the young Reichskammergerichtsreferendar, J. W. Goethe, wrote under the silhouette which he sent to his beloved Lottie—

"'s ist ungefähr das garst'ge Gesicht  
Aber meine Liebe siehst du nicht."

In the case of Beethoven, the application of such a

sentiment may be looked for in the peculiar circumstances of his life, in the helplessness caused by his deafness, and which sometimes irresistibly urged him to confide in strangers ; but far more will it be found in the bitter anguish of his soul. In many of the most superficial descriptions, we discern the man who touches our inmost soul, the artist who takes possession of our spirit ; and if only a very few of these descriptions display an adequate appreciation of Beethoven, the whole gives us a view of the rich landscape, with its hills and plains, its deep, dark ravines, and smiling meadows—the meetings of the gods and the gambling of the satyrs—and brings before us an image of the great man in all its original and distinctive features.

And this image of one of Art's true martyrs gives us also a clear insight into the importance of this art, which afforded him, as it does every lofty nature, rare spiritual comfort and nourishment. Outsiders, even, who are still in spiritual bonds, bow in reverence before him, and are aroused to the perception of the higher objects of our existence.

In concluding this long explanation, I will refer to the utterances of the "extravagant child," Bettina, and of that seemingly kindred spirit, Dr. Weissenbach, which clearly show that they had "glimpses into the nature of this saint." Who, I ask, has brought that "clearness" into our art of which Goethe so confidently and yearningly dreamed ? Who has created



---

an art corresponding to that impulse; which, according to Dr. Weissenbach, is "the surest sign of our divine descent," the impulse "to enjoy and produce the beautiful"? Who, like Beethoven, has revealed the innermost secrets of our being, and portrayed the whole nature and development of man's existence?

Of your splendid gift of "Bayreuth" I will not speak; but in this humble offering, this supplement to the biography of our great Beethoven, I beg you to accept the heartfelt gratitude and regard of one of the truest friends and admirers of your noble achievements.

LUDWIG NOHL.

Heidelberg, October, 1876.



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# BEETHOVEN

DEPICTED BY HIS CONTEMPORARIES.



## CHAPTER I.



### BEETHOVEN'S BOYHOOD.



OUR first sketch is by the philologist, Dr. W. C. Müller, of Bremen, to whose meeting with Beethoven we shall presently refer, and who immediately after the master's death wrote "Something about Ludwig van Beethoven" in the *Leipsic Allegemeine Musikalische Zeitung*. Although neither exhaustive nor thoroughly accurate, this account gives a clear idea of the unhappiness of his boyhood, and is, therefore, worth preserving. Dr. Müller says—

"Within the last few weeks the newspapers have contained much that is interesting about this cele-

brated composer, details about his illness, the assistance sent from England, his death and funeral. To the lovers of art, and even to the world in general, the fullest particulars concerning this extraordinary genius are valuable. The following brief sketch may, therefore, not be out of place. It is a faithful one, for we have, for several years, corresponded with Beethoven and his most intimate friends, and in 1820 we made his personal acquaintance.

“We learn from the church register that Beethoven was born at Bonn, December 17th, 1770,<sup>1</sup> not 1772 as has been generally stated. On this point he was himself mistaken: time passed unheeded by him; in the tone-world in which he lived, periods flowed on without divisions of days and years. His father was tenor singer in the chapel of the Elector of Cologne, Maximilian Franz, one of the brothers of the Emperor Joseph II. Like all the children of the Empress Maria Theresa, the Elector was a warm lover of music, and had one of the most perfect bands of the time. Some relatives of the celebrated Romberg were members of it;<sup>2</sup> two of the more still living—Ries the elder, father of the famous pianist, and

---

<sup>1</sup> Beethoven was baptized on December 17th, but the actual day of his birth cannot be certainly determined. We must, therefore, adopt the generally accepted date.

<sup>2</sup> These were Andreas Romberg, the composer of Schiller’s “Lay of the Bell,” and his cousin, who was his junior by three years, the famous violoncellist, Bernhard Romberg. Both musicians will be again referred to.

Beethoven's best pupil, and Simrock, music publisher at Bonn. These are our chief authorities for particulars about Beethoven's youth.

"He received from his father, in early childhood, his first lessons on the piano and violin; and not being compelled to attend to anything else, both wrote and spelt badly. When a boy he had an ungainly figure; as a youth his appearance was not more graceful, nor in his fiftieth year do we in this respect find any change in him. What a striking contrast to Mozart!

"Ludwig led a very retired life, and was under strict orders from his father to remain constantly in his room practising; he did not, therefore, feel the loss of society. He was shy, and in what little intercourse he had with others would answer in monosyllables; but he thought and observed a great deal, abandoning himself to the emotions and brooding fancies awakened first by music and afterwards by the poets. Mozart, on the contrary, was taken into society when only seven years of age; whence his pliant, affable, sympathetic, and kindly disposition, his early skill in composition, and the perfect regularity and universally pleasing character of his cosmopolitan music. Beethoven when a boy did not think of preserving his fancies for himself or for others, by committing them to paper; he early began to indulge his imagination on the piano, and more especially on the violin, and was so absorbed and absent-minded that he had many a

scolding from his mother for not heeding the dinner-hour.<sup>1</sup>

“After giving up the violin, he pursued his beloved art on the piano. It is highly probable that in his twelfth year, he was acquainted with all the forms used by the contemporary composers, Haydn, Mozart, Sterkel, for they appear in his three sonatas which the father published in Ludwig’s eleventh (thirteenth) year, and dedicated to the Elector of Cologne. They clearly indicate the young beginner, and how much of them is original cannot be determined, for they are not distinguishable from the style of the day; the figures are borrowed from the above-named masters, and the phrases are deficient in roundness and rhythm. Very opposite is the character of the pianoforte trios, known as his first works. Not only is the form very different, but each trio contains a tone-picture capable of being conceived in the imagination and plastically represented. In his fourteenth year, he was cembalist in the orchestra, that is he accompanied with the

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Müller here relates the well-known story of the spider which had descended on to the violin, and was killed by his mother, whereupon Ludwig gave up that instrument. This really relates to the violinist Berthaume; and Beethoven’s famulus, Schindler, says that for himself he should not have cared to recall such an incident, adding humorously that it was more likely fly, spider, and everything else would have fled at the sound of his wretched scraping.

double bass in the symphonies; in his sixteenth year, he became organist to the Elector.<sup>1</sup>

“While in this position he once incurred the displeasure of his kind patron. To humiliate a confident and boastful Italian singer, who despised all German music, Beethoven was persuaded by his colleagues to put him out in the tune and time of a certain aria. The attempt succeeded to the satisfaction of the band; but as the disturbance occurred during mass, Beethoven received a sharp reprimand; he did not, however, betray the instigators of the trick.<sup>2</sup>

“Hitherto his style of playing had been powerful, but rough, although very rich in new forms of fancy. He was universally admired, but being simple, modest and unpretending, was not envied. In his eighteenth year, some of his companions took him with them to Mayence, that he might appear there as a virtuoso. They were fortunate enough to receive

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<sup>1</sup> In the summer of 1782, in his eleventh year, therefore, Beethoven was already “deputy organist,” and in the following spring held the post of “cembalist” under the court organist, Ch. Neefe, who was at that time virtually bandmaster, for his business was to play the score of the operas and symphonies on the piano, and conduct the orchestra. This accounts in some measure for Beethoven’s marvellous aptitude at an early age for reading from score and playing at sight.

<sup>2</sup> The singer was not an Italian, but Ferdinand Heller; and he did not sing an aria, but the Lamentations during Passion Week, 1785. Beethoven, whose business it was to accompany him on the piano, was fourteen years of age.



an invitation from the Abbé Sterkel, intendant of the band, a well-known pianist, whom Beethoven much wished to hear. The Abbé played one of his sonatas with great delicacy of execution. Beethoven stood in a corner listening intently; such refined playing he had never heard. Then he was asked to play. Persistently refusing, his companions led him to the piano by force; he began timidly, but soon forgot his surroundings, and launched forth into an improvisation which the Abbé could not sufficiently praise. He was asked to perform his published variations on 'Vieni Amore;' but as he did not know them all by heart, he played seven new ones which were still finer. His friends were amazed at the refinement of his playing, which had become as delicate as the Abbé's. We cannot attribute this to a desire of annoying his patron, as has been suggested."

We have only to add that the incident with which this notice of Beethoven's boyhood closes, occurred at Aschaffenburg, during a journey of the Bonn band to Mergentheim, of which we shall hear. Beethoven's age was over twenty, and we shall see from the extract entitled "Mozart" what truth there is in the statement that he had never heard "refined playing."



## CHAPTER II.

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### *FIRST PUBLIC MENTION.*



HE Electoral organist, Christian Gottlob Neeße, who was a literary dilettante, and contributed some very valuable letters on Music and Musicians to the public journals, wrote in 1783—4 an "Account of the Elector of Cologne's Chapel at Bonn," in C. F. Cramer's "Musical Magazine," published at Kiel. It runs thus :—

"Ludwig van Beethoven, son of the above mentioned tenor singer, is a very promising boy of eleven.<sup>1</sup> He plays the piano with fluency and force, reads well at sight, and has mastered the greater part of Sebastian Bach's 'Wohltemperirte Clavier,' which Herr Neeße put into his hands. Any one acquainted with this collection of Preludes and Fugues in every key (which might truly be called *Ne Plus Ultra*) will understand

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<sup>1</sup> He was then thirteen. It is probable that his father intentionally deceived people about his age, that he might appear a veritable "infant prodigy."

what this means. As far as his other occupations permitted, Herr Neeffe has given him instruction in Thorough Bass. He is now practising him in composition, and to encourage him, has had printed his Nine Variations for the Piano, on a March by E. J. Dressler. This youthful genius deserves assistance, that he may be enabled to travel ; he will certainly become a second Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, if he continues as he has begun."





## CHAPTER III.

### WITH MOZART.

**N**ATURALLY it was the wish of both father and son, that the latter should go to Vienna and receive instruction from Mozart. *Die Entführung* and *Figaro* were already written, and what a coruscation of glorious chamber music flashed around these two fixed stars! Otto Jahn gives us on "good authority" a short account of the brief but important meeting of the two first real poets in music. He says—

"Beethoven, as a youth of great promise, went to Vienna in the winter of 1786 (?), but could only remain a short time. While in that city he was introduced to Mozart, and at his request played something, which Mozart taking to be a show piece, praised with little warmth. Beethoven, observing this, asked him for a theme for improvisation; and as he always played well when irritated, and was further stirred by the presence of the much venerated master, he improvised so marvellously that Mozart, whose attention and expectation were increasing every moment, went to the friends in the next room, and

exclaimed with ardour: 'Look after him, he will some day make a great name in the world.'

This first visit to Vienna, which undoubtedly occurred in the spring of 1787, was brought to a sudden conclusion by the sad news of his mother's fatal illness. F. Ries, the pupil already referred to, states that the master himself told him that he had received instruction from Mozart, but that he had never heard him play. But he must have heard him, for in the so-called "Conversations," which in later years the deaf musician always had at hand, we find in the year 1825, in the writing of the violin dilettante, Karl Holz, these words: "Was Mozart a good pianist? Was not pianoforte playing then in its infancy?" And the opinion which can here be read between the lines is confirmed by Charles Czerny, Liszt's early instructor, and as we shall see, for a time, a pupil of Beethoven. He says, "Beethoven had heard Mozart, and said some years afterwards that his playing was neat and clear, but somewhat empty, insipid, and antiquated." The charms of Mozart's style would be sure to vanish from so masculine a mind as Beethoven's, stimulated by the stirring events of the Revolution of 1789, filled with the North-German ideas of life, and demanding always a deep intellectual meaning. We shall find other grounds for this opinion, although Beethoven plainly showed, even in his last works, that no one else so nearly approached or so thoroughly understood Mozart.



## CHAPTER IV.

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### *THE ELECTOR'S BAND AT BONN.*



IN 1824, a few years therefore before his death, Beethoven wrote to his publisher, Schott, at Mayence: "I see by your journal that Junker is still living; he was one of the first who appreciatively noticed me. Remember me to him."

Beethoven was at the zenith of his power and fame, when he noticed Junker's name in the new musical publication, *Caccilia*. Charles Louis Junker, chaplain at Kirchberg in Hohenlohe, an amateur composer, and dilettante musical *litterateur*, had however been some time dead. In 1791 he wrote an account of the visit of the Bonn band to Mergentheim, in Franconia. Beethoven considered that to him he owed his first public mention. Bossler's *Musikalische Correspondenz* was a paper much read in musical circles. The account has a twofold interest as showing Beethoven among his colleagues, and in his individual studies and work.

"There is a description in the *Musikalische Correspondenz* of the Elector's band at Cologne, to which I



can add some particulars, as I was fortunate enough to become acquainted with several of the members, and had a few opportunities of hearing the band.

"The Elector remained, as is well known, a considerable time at Mergentheim, and had some twenty of his band with him. I spent there two of the happiest days of my life (the 11th and 12th Oct.): I heard the most exquisite music, made the acquaintance of some first rate artists, who gave me warm assurances of friendship, and received me with a cordiality for which my sincerest thanks are here due.

"On the first day I heard the musical performance, which took place regularly while the Elector dined. There were two oboes, two clarinets, two flageolets, and two horns. These eight players may fairly be called masters in their art. One seldom hears music of this kind so harmonious and intelligent, and marked by such purity of tone; it was also distinguished from similar performances by the greater length of the pieces: the Overture to Mozart's *Don Juan* was then being played.

"Soon after the musical performance during dinner, the play began. It was *King Theodor*, with music by Paisiello. The part of Theodor was taken by Herr Rüdler, who is especially good in tragedy. Achmet was played by Herr Spizeder, a fine bass singer, but deficient in dramatic action. The host was Herr Lux, who has a very good bass voice, is the best actor of the troupe, and seems as if he were made for

comedy. Mdlle. Willmann took the *rôle* of Lisette ; she sings with a great deal of taste, her delivery is excellent, and her action very vigorous and spirited.<sup>1</sup> Herr Mändel as Sandrino was a very good and pleasing singer. The orchestra was capital, the *piani*, *forti*, and *crescendi* being exceedingly well observed. Herr Ries, the expert score reader and player at sight, conducted with the violin. He is worthy of being placed beside a Cannabich ; his firm, vigorous lead inspires every player with life and spirit.<sup>2</sup>

“The arrangement of the band was such as I had not seen elsewhere, but I thought it very convenient. Herr Ries stood on a raised platform, in the middle of the theatre, and close to the stage, where he could be seen by every one. Immediately below and behind him were a counter violinist and violoncellist ; on his right were the first violins, with the second violins opposite them ; behind the violins the violas, with the clarinets opposite ; behind the violas the counter violin and violoncello ; and last of all the trumpets.

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<sup>1</sup> Magdalene Willmann was one of the most famous German singers of the day, and very pretty. When she went to Vienna in 1794, Beethoven, who had then been in the city two years, was so captivated by her charms that he offered her his hand. She refused, “because he was so ugly, and half crazy,” as she afterwards told her niece.

<sup>2</sup> Cannabich is referred to in Mozart’s Life. Under Karl Theodor at Mannheim, he established that famous band which afterwards went to Munich, and which has served as a model for many an orchestra.

On the conductor's left were the wind instruments ; the oboes, with the flageolets opposite, and flutes and horns. The opera itself has so much light and brilliant colouring that it makes a great impression the first time of hearing, and quite captivates the listener, but I think that on frequent representation it would be found too Italian for German taste.

"I was most struck by the aria in which the unhappy king relates his horrible dream. Without falling into extravagances, the composer has depicted this scene with unusual success, and has introduced effective shading into his picture by means of the wind instruments. I do not believe there is in the whole piece another air equally striking, or with so many telling passages. With this exception, it seemed to me that the composer repeated too much, developed his thoughts to a wearisome extent, and failed sometimes in carrying out his intentions, also that in the choruses the accompaniments were too elaborate.

"At ten o'clock the next morning there was a rehearsal for the grand state concert which was to take place at six in the evening. Herr Welsch kindly invited me to the rehearsal, which was held at the residence of Herr Ries, who shook hands with me when I arrived. This gave me an opportunity of witnessing the good *entente* among the members of this band : they are of one heart and one mind. 'We know nothing of cabals and intrigues, the utmost harmony reigns among us, and we love each other

as brothers,' said Herr Simrock. I perceived also the Elector's esteem and regard for his band. Just as the rehearsal was going to begin, the conductor, Herr Ries, was sent for by the Prince, and when he returned his pockets were full of money. 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'the Elector presents you with 1,000 thalers on the anniversary of his birthday.' I can also testify to the rare skill of these executants. Herr Winneberger produced at this rehearsal, a symphony of his own composition, which was anything but easy, containing as it did several solos for wind instruments, but to the astonishment of the composer it went capially on the first trial.

"The state concert took place an hour after the 'musique de table.' It commenced with a symphony by Mozart, followed by an aria and recitativo sung by Simonetti, and a violoncello concerto played by Herr Romberg. Then came a symphony by Pleyel, an aria sung by Simonetti, and written by Righini. A double concerto for the violin and violoncello was executed by the Messrs. Romberg, and the concert concluded with Herr Winneberger's symphony, which contains much brilliant writing. My first opinion was again fully justified, for there could not have been a more perfect performance. So precise an observance of the *piani*, *forti*, and *rinforzandi*, and such good *crescendi* and *diminuendi* had until then been heard at Mannheim alone. It would be difficult to find an orchestra where the violins and basses were so perfect.

Herr Winneberger, on comparing this band with the good players of Wallerstein, coincided in this opinion.

“A word or two about certain *virtuosi*. Herr Simonetti has an agreeable tenor voice, and an attractive style. Judging not only from the two slow airs which he gave at this concert, but from his manner of singing generally, his *forte* is the *adagio* style. His embellishments are never excessive, but novel and telling, arising as it were from the nature of the piece. His pleasing countenance, on which there is always a slight smile, and his handsome figure, add perhaps to the agreeable effect of his singing.

“The playing of Herr Romberg, the younger (Bernhard), is clearer and more precise than that of most violoncellists; it combines extraordinary rapidity with a charming expression. He brings an unusually sharp, firm, and piercing tone from his instrument, especially in the shaded passages. Considering the difficult *technique* of the violoncello, we might award most praise to Herr Romberg for his perfect clearness and purity of tone in the exceedingly rapid *allegro*; if it were not that this is after all only mechanical skill, and that a connoisseur measures the greatness of a *virtuoso* by a different standard, namely, the manner of playing, the perfection of the expression, or of the sensuous representation. The connoisseur, therefore, awards the

palm to the expressive *adagio*. It would have been impossible to have produced more perfect and judiciously coloured *nuances* ; to have drawn forth tones so exactly expressive of the sentiment, and appealing so directly to the heart.

“How well he perceives all the beauties of detail belonging to the nature of the sentiment, and which cannot be indicated by signs ! What effects he produces by swelling to the loudest *fortissimo*, and falling to the gentlest *pianissimo* !

“Herr Romberg the elder (Andreas) is equal to him ; he draws from the violin the purest and most delicate tones, combines great rapidity of execution with exquisite taste, and well understands what may be called musical painting. His movements, too, are always natural, his attitude unembarrassed and unaffected, which is more than can be said of every great player.

“I also heard one of the greatest pianists—the dear, good Beethoven, some of whose compositions, written at eleven years of age, appeared in the Speier *Blumenlese* for 1783. He declined to play at a public concert, perhaps because he did not like to perform on one of Spath’s pianos, being accustomed at Bonn to Stein’s instruments.<sup>1</sup> But what was infinitely better, I heard him improvise ; in fact, I was myself asked to give him a theme. The greatness of this gentle and amiable

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<sup>1</sup> The Stein pianos of Augsburg were the precursors of the Streicher pianos of Vienna. We shall hear presently of Andreas Streicher and his wife Nannette (*née* Stein).



man as a *virtuoso* may, I think, be estimated by the almost inexhaustible wealth of his imagination, the skill of his execution, and the thorough originality of his expression. I did not find him deficient in any of the attributes of a great artist. I have frequently heard Vogler play the piano for hour after hour (of his organ playing I express no opinion, as I never heard it), and always admired his extraordinary dexterity; but Beethoven, in addition to his fluent execution, is more telling, suggestive, expressive—in a word, he touches the heart, and he is as good in *adagio* as in *allegro*.<sup>1</sup> The clever artists of this band are his admirers one and all, and listen intently when he plays. But he is modest and quite unassuming. Yet he acknowledged that on the tours which he undertook by order of the Elector, he rarely found in the most celebrated pianists what he had thought himself justified in expecting.<sup>2</sup> His playing differs also so widely from the ordinary mode, that he appears to have attained his present high perfection by altogether original means. If I had yielded to his pressing request, in which Herr Winneberger

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<sup>1</sup> Abbé Vogler, the future teacher of C. M. von Weber, was at that time one of the most famous players in Germany.

<sup>2</sup> The only one of these tours we know anything of is the one to Vienna, when he saw Mozart. We can here discern Beethoven's opinion of Mozart's playing; he had also just heard Sterkell.

united, to remain another day at Mergentheim, Herr Beethoven might have played to me for hours, and in the company of these two great artists my enjoyment would have been perfect.

“I conclude with a few general observations.

“1. The Elector had with him only about twenty of the fifty members of his band (the description of which in the *Musikalische Correspondenz* is not quite right, and will be corrected by Herr Neefe) ; but they were, perhaps, the cream of it, although Messrs. Neefe and Reicha were absent. With the former I was especially pleased, having long wished to become acquainted with him.

“2. As we said before, the superiority of this band consists, perhaps, mainly in the unexceptional excellence of the violins and basses.

“3. My statement about the unity and harmony among the members was corroborated by many trustworthy witnesses, among others the Elector’s valet, who must have had opportunities of knowing.

“4. The behaviour of the band is very polite and refined. They are evidently men of high tone, and nothing could have equalled their good breeding. They had a hard time of it at the concert, the large audience crowded so closely round them that they could scarcely play, and the perspiration was streaming down their faces ; but they bore it all quietly and composedly, without showing the least annoyance. At a court of one of the minor princes,

complaints and abuses would have been freely lavished.

"5. The members of this band are, almost without exception, in the prime of early manhood, and well-educated. They have a splendid *physique*, and when attired in the scarlet and gold uniform of the Prince their appearance is very striking.

"6. We have, perhaps, been accustomed to regard the Electorate of Cologne as a dark land into which the rays of enlightenment had never penetrated ; but a visit to the Elector's Court would soon alter this opinion. I found the members of the band men of very liberal and sound understanding.

"7. The Elector, the most humane and best of princes, is not only, as is well-known, himself a performer, but an enthusiastic lover of music. He seems as if he could not hear enough. At the concert I went to, he was the most attentive listener present."



## CHAPTER V.

### *EARLY DAYS IN VIENNA.*



THE following sketch I wrote, myself, at Augsburg, in 1864. Although but brief, it gives a picture of Beethoven's doings, manners, and character soon after he settled at Vienna, and may, therefore, be quoted without curtailment.

"I was introduced to-day, by the bandmaster H. S., to a most interesting old lady, who had much to relate about Beethoven's early years in Vienna. Her name is Von Bernhard, and she was born in 1783. The strange appearance of this old lady of eighty-one in her unfashionable dress, and large white cap in the old style, did not seem to offer a very encouraging prospect; but the first few words with her showed that she had full possession of all her faculties, unusual vivacity, and a clear judgment. She exhibited a truly noble mind, a modest amiability, which in one whose years claim such respect is doubly pleasing.

“Frau von Bernhard was the daughter of Herr von Kissow, who lived for many years at Reval in Estland, and in the beginning of 1780 went to Augsburg, where he married. His daughter was born there, and giving early promise of considerable talent, her father, who was a great lover of music, desired to give her a thorough artistic training. A very favourable opportunity offered, for the well-known Nanette Stein, daughter of the most famous pianoforte maker of the day, was giving lessons in Vienna, where she had recently (1794) arrived with her future husband, the pianoforte master, Johannes Streicher, Schiller’s youthful friend. Streicher was very intimate with the Kissow family, and at their request found a home for their daughter, then twelve years of age, in the house of the first secretary to the Russian embassy, Herr von Klüpfell.

“The young girl now received instruction from Streicher, and soon had an *entrée* into the musical circles of the first nobility, with whom Klüpfell, owing to his public position, and by the good will of his chief, the celebrated Count Rasumowsky, was on familiar terms. One day Streicher placed before Fräulein Kissow Beethoven’s Pianoforte Sonatas, Op. 2, published by Artaria in 1796. He remarked that they were new works, which the ladies would think too incomprehensible and difficult to play ; would she like to learn them ? The young lady assured him that

she should ; and she soon played this and others of Beethoven's pianoforte pieces with such skill that she was invited, not only to Rasumowsky's, but to Lichnowsky's most select musical *réunions*. Beethoven, who was the brilliant centre of these circles, soon became acquainted with the young girl who played his music with so much ability ; and he thought so highly of her talents that from that time till 1800, when she left Vienna, he regularly sent her a copy of his new pianoforte compositions, as soon as they were printed. Not one of the little friendly or joking letters, with which he accompanied his gifts, has unfortunately been preserved : so many handsome Russian officers frequented Herr Klüpfell's that the ugly Beethoven made no impression on the young lady.

“Herr Klüpfell was very musical, and Beethoven went a great deal to his house, and often played the piano for hours, but always ‘without notes.’ To do this was then thought marvellous, and delighted everyone. One day the well-known composer Franz Krommer was there, and played one of his new compositions. When he began, Beethoven was sitting on the sofa beside Fräulein Kissow, but he soon began to walk about, turn over music at the piano, and not to pay the least attention to the performance. Herr Klüpfell was annoyed, and commissioned Beethoven's friend, Herr Zmeskall, to tell him that his conduct was



unbecoming, that a young and unknown man ought to show respect towards a senior composer of merit. From that moment Beethoven never set foot in Klüpfell's house.

"Frau von Bernhard has a lively recollection of the young man's wayward peculiarities. She says: 'When he visited us, he generally put his head in at the door before entering to see if there were anyone present he did not like. He was short and insignificant looking, with a red face covered with pock marks. His hair was quite dark. His dress was very common, quite a contrast to the elegant attire customary in those days, especially in our circles. He spoke with a strong provincial accent; his manner of expression was slightly vulgar; his general bearing showed no signs of culture, and his behaviour was very unmannerly. He was very proud, and I have known him refuse to play, even when Countess Thun, the mother of Princess Lichnowsky, had fallen on her knees before him as he lay on the sofa to beg him to. The Countess was a very eccentric woman.

"'I was frequently invited to Lichnowsky's to play. The Prince was a kind, refined man, and his wife a very beautiful woman; but they did not seem happy together, the Princess always had such a melancholy expression of countenance, and I heard that her husband was spending beyond his means. Her sister, who is still handsomer, was

married to another of Beethoven's patrons.<sup>1</sup> She was almost always present when there was a musical performance. There also I saw Haydn and Salieri, who were then very famous, while Beethoven excited no interest. I remember quite well, Frau von Bernhard concluded, 'how Haydn and Salieri used to sit on the sofa at one side of the little-music room, both most carefully attired in the former mode with wigs, shoes and silk stockings, while Beethoven came negligently dressed in the freer fashion of the Upper Rhine.'"

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<sup>1</sup> Prince Charles Lichnowsky, Mozart's friend and pupil, was one of Beethoven's first patrons in Vienna, as also was the Russian Ambassador Count (afterwards Prince) Rasumowsky. Their wives were sisters.





## CHAPTER VI.

### *A PIANOFORTE COMPETITION.*



THE following recollections were written in 1844, by the composer, Wenzel Tomaschek, of Prague (born 1774), and published in the annual called *Libussa*, in 1845. They first show us the real greatness of Beethoven's playing and improvisation. They run thus—

"In 1798, while I was pursuing my legal studies, Beethoven, the giant of pianoforte players, came to Prague. He gave a concert in the Convictsaale before a large audience, when he played his C major Concerto, Op. 15, the Adagio and graceful Rondo from the A major Sonata, Op. 2, and concluded with an improvisation on an air ('Ah tu fosti il primo oggetto,' from Mozart's *Titus*) given him by Countess Sch . . . . (Schlick?). Beethoven's magnificent playing, and especially his bold improvisation, made such a revolution in my thoughts and feelings, that for several days I did not touch the piano, and it was only rational reflection and my

unquenchable love of the art that made me resume my pianistic studies, which I did with increased diligence.

"I heard Beethoven at his second concert, but his playing and composition failed to make the same powerful impression on me that they had the first time. He performed the Concerto in B major, which he had just written at Prague.<sup>1</sup> Then I heard him for the third time at Count C . . .'s (Clari?), when after the graceful Rondo from the A major Sonata, he improvised on the theme, 'Ah vous dirai-je Maman?' This time I followed his performance more calmly; I indeed admired his powerful and brilliant playing, but did not fail to observe the frequent and abrupt changes of motive, which destroy the organic unity and gradual development of ideas. Such blemishes often mar his grandest writing and his finest conceptions, and rudely disturb the listener's enjoyment. He seemed to think strangeness and originality the chief objects to be aimed at in composition, as appears from his answer to a lady, who asked whether he frequently attended Mozart's operas, that 'he was not acquainted with them, and did not care to hear other than his own music, lest he should impair his originality.'"

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<sup>1</sup> This can only apply to the last movement; the principal portion of the work had been completed some time.

This was evidently only an evasive answer, for we know from other sources that Beethoven was familiar with *Figaro*, *Don Juan*, and *The Magic Flute*. The rest of Tomaschek's remarks are as obsolete as they are old-fashioned. We, therefore, give only the concluding sentence—

“Beethoven left Prague, and I felt the benefit of having heard the king of pianists as his own interpreter.”

That we may have a complete picture of this “giant among pianists,” we quote the following description of an encounter with a rival of almost equal skill. Joseph Wölfl, of Salzburg, born in 1772, and therefore two years younger than Beethoven, was an infant prodigy, who had played a violin concerto in public at seven years of age. He was a pupil of Mozart's father, and was thought well of by Mozart himself. He had already produced two or three operas at Vienna, and, what chiefly concerns us to know, had met with unusual success both there and elsewhere. Tomaschek, who after Beethoven's visit to Prague would be especially competent to form a correct opinion, thus describes the musical athlete whom, in March, 1799, he had just heard—

“Not long after, Wölfl came to Prague. Numerous newspaper reports about his extraordinary pianoforte playing had awakened the curiosity of musical amateurs in this city. Any one wishing

to see him or speak to him could find him at the 'Blaue Wein-traube,' where he played billiards all day long, and where in spite of his skill in this game, he lost more than 600 gulden to the marker. Wölffl referred him for his money to the receipts from his concert.

"The concert took place in the theatre before a large audience, when Wölffl played a concerto of his own, with perfect purity and precision, the enormous size of his hand giving him exceptional advantages. Then he played Mozart's Fantasia in F minor, published by Breitkopf, for four hands, exactly as it was printed, without missing or shortening a note for the sake of execution, as the so-called romanticists of our time delight in doing; who, moreover, produce a fatal confusion of sound by means of the pedal, with which they imagine they cover all defects. As we have said, Wölffl played his piece without a single mistake. Afterwards he improvised, introducing the theme from Wenzel Müller's *Sonntagskind* 'Weinn's Liserl wacht,' and concluded the concert with some very beautiful and brilliant variations. Hearty applause followed the performance of this *virtuoso*, who is in his style unique.

"A pianist, six feet high, whose enormous fingers can stretch a thirteenth with ease; who is so spare that his clothes hang about him as on a scarecrow; who, without changing his attitude, surmounts with incredible facility, and with a touch which, if weak,



is very clear, obstacles which are impossibilities to others; who often plays whole passages in moderately quick time with one finger, as for example the long tenor passage of semi-quavers in the *Andante* of Mozart's *Fantasia*;—such a player is indeed unparalleled. What would our journalists say to such a performer, to whom all our pianists, with their piles of studies and so-called fantasias, are nullities, who have never perceived the true meaning of art, whose bravura is a grotesque imitation of the leaping of grasshoppers, and who thus become true musical Gascons? Wölffl's playing had neither light nor shade, and was quite wanting in masculine energy, so that in spite of his peculiar virtuosity, he failed to touch the heart, although exciting by his gymnastic feats great admiration. He was a very good-natured man, but deficient in education; his humorous, childish nature had gained for him the name of 'crazy Wölffl.' When asked why he did not write in the same style as he played, he answered: 'The world already thinks me a fool, and what would it say to me, if I were to put into ordinary hands compositions which are suitable only for my long fingers?'

We conclude this account with the following comparison of the two musical heroes, quoted from the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, for April 22nd, 1799—

“Opinions differ as to their relative superiority,

but the majority incline towards Wölffl. I will endeavour to describe the peculiarities of both, without showing preference to either artist. Beethoven's playing is more brilliant, but less delicate, and fails sometimes in clearness. He appears to most advantage in improvisation, and it is indeed marvellous to see how easily and logically he will extemporise on any given theme, not merely by varying the figures (as many virtuosi do with much success and—bluster), but by a real development of the idea. Since the death of Mozart, who was to my mind the *non plus ultra* of players, no one has given me so much pleasure as Beethoven. Wölffl is, in this respect, inferior; his claim to superiority is that in addition to his thorough musical knowledge and excellence in composition, he performs passages which really appear impossible of execution, with astonishing ease, clearness and precision. Of course, the size of his hand is a great help to him. He always plays with taste, and in the *Adagii* especially is so pleasing, so equally removed from coldness and exaggeration, that he not only excites admiration, but gives pleasure. Wölffl's unassuming and amiable behaviour naturally contrast favourably with the somewhat haughty manners of Beethoven."

Here follows the description of the competition, which, if somewhat sensationally written, is in the main true. We may see what a deep impression

the event produced, from the fact that this account was written thirty years afterwards. It forms an appendix to those garbled "Studies of Beethoven" by Ignaz von Seyfried; but he, being at that time very intimate with the master, may in this instance be accepted as a faithful witness. He says—

"Beethoven had already attracted public notice by various compositions, and passed in Vienna for a pianist of the first rank, when in the latter years of the last century, a rival arose in the person of Wölffl. Then was in a manner repeated the Parisian feud of the Gluckists and Piccinists; and the numerous lovers of art in the Imperial city divided themselves into two parties. At the head of Beethoven's admirers was the amiable Prince von Lichnowsky; among the most zealous defenders of Wölffl was Freiherr Raymund von Wetzlar. This highly cultured gentleman, with true British hospitality, used to keep open house during the summer, at his pleasant villa at Grünberg, near the Imperial castle of Schönbrunn, for foreign and native artists, to whom it was a resort as agreeable as it was desirable.<sup>1</sup> The interesting competition between the two *virtuosi* was a source of endless enjoyment to the select party assembled there; each artist pro-

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<sup>1</sup> "The rich Jew, Wetzlar," as Mozart wrote to his father on November 24th, 1781, was also his "true good friend," which explains his patronage of Wölffl.

duced his latest work, or gave free play to the momentary inspirations of his fancy, or they would improvise at two pianos alternately, on each other's themes; and the duet *capriccii* which they thus composed would doubtless have been well worthy of preservation.

“For mechanical dexterity it would have been difficult, perhaps impossible, to have awarded the palm to either of the combatants; kind nature had been more liberal towards Wölffl in providing him with a gigantic hand, which made tenths as easy to him as octaves were to others, and enabled him to play successive passages of these intervals with the speed of lightning. In improvisation, Beethoven already displayed his inclination towards the dismal and gloomy; while luxuriating in the boundless tone-world, he was emancipated from everything earthly, the spirit broke its fetters, shook off the yoke of bondage, and soared triumphantly into ætherial realms; now his playing would be like a wild foaming cataract, and the enchanter would force from the instrument astounding effects, almost beyond its possibilities; then sink exhausted, murmuring soft complainings, dissolving in melancholy; then the soul rose again, triumphant over earthly sorrows, turning heavenward with devotional strains, and finding soothing consolation in the innocent bosom of holy nature. But who can fathom the depths of

the sea? Beethoven's improvisation was like the sacred Sanscrit language, whose hieroglyphics the initiated alone can decipher. Wölffl, on the other hand, trained in the school of Mozart, was always equal, never dull, and being invariably clear, was more accessible to the majority; art served him merely as a means to an end, he never made it a pompous show-piece of dry learning; and he never failed to excite and sustain interest by a well-arranged succession of ideas. Any one who has heard Hummel will understand what this means.<sup>1</sup>

"An unprejudiced and impartial observer derived a great deal of pleasure from watching the two Macenates, seeing with what anxious attention and approving looks they followed the performances of their *protégés*, and then with true chivalrous courtesy how each yielded the palm to his rival.

"But of this the *protégés* themselves took little account; they were best able to appreciate each other's merits, and accordingly entertained a mutual esteem. As upright, honest Germans, they proceeded on the praiseworthy principle that the path of art was broad enough for all.

"Wölffl showed his respect for Beethoven's genius by dedicating to him his Pianoforte Sonata, Op. 7, which appeared about this time. He soon disappeared from public life, for he died early. He was

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<sup>1</sup> Hummel was a pupil of Mozart.

wanting in that strong, enduring, intellectual energy and ideality which sustained our master in the most troubled circumstances, causing him ever to rise with renewed strength from every sorrow and misfortune. This competition increased his fame as it added to his knowledge."





## CHAPTER VII.

CHARLES CZERNY.



E come now to that prolific composer, Charles Czerny, who was for ten years almost the sole authority, in Germany, on pianoforte teaching; and who, though not possessing the great intellect of his master, Beethoven, exercised by his *technique* a very decisive influence on posterity. He is linked with the new school, through having been the teacher of F. Liszt.

Charles Czerny was born February 21st, 1791. "From 1795 to 1804," says the *Neue Wiener Musikzeitung*, for August 13th, 1857, "the Czernys' house was a *rendezvous* for the chief musicians of the day: Abbé Gelinek, Joseph Lipawsky, an organist and pianist particularly celebrated for his playing *a vista*, in which he was perhaps excelled only by a Beethoven, or a Krump-holz." In 1842, he wrote a record of his own life, which was placed after his death in the archives of the "Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde"



at Vienna; and for the Jubilee Festival in 1870, the part relating to Beethoven was published by the keeper of the archives in the annual report of the Conservatoire of that society. We quote from it as follows—

“At that time (the end of the last century), the best pianists in Vienna were:

“Wölffl, distinguished for his bravura playing; Gelinek, a universal favourite on account of his elegant and brilliant playing, as well as for his variations; and Lipawsky, a great player at sight, and famous for his performance of Bach's Fugues.

“I remember Gelinek telling my father one day that he was invited to a party in the evening to break a lance with a new pianist. ‘We will make mincemeat of him,’ added Gelinek.

“The next day my father asked how the affair had gone off.

“‘Oh!’ said Gelinek, quite crestfallen, ‘I shall never forget yesterday! The devil is in the young man; I never heard such playing! He improvised on a theme I gave him in such a manner as I never even heard Mozart. Then he played some of his own compositions, which are wonderful and magnificent beyond everything; he brings out of the piano tones and effects we have never dreamed of.’

“‘Aye,’ said my father in astonishment, ‘what is his name!’

“‘He is a short, ugly, dark, cross-looking young

man,' said Gelinek, 'whom Prince Lichnowsky brought here from Germany some years ago to learn composition from Haydn, Albrechtsberger, and Salieri; his name is Beethoven.'<sup>1</sup>

"This was the first time I had heard this name. I begged my father to procure me Beethoven's compositions, and I soon obtained all that had appeared—the three first Trios and Sonatas, some variations, *Adelaide*, &c.; and as I had already studied much good music by other masters, I soon learnt to appreciate, as far as my age permitted, the beauty and originality of Beethoven's works. To this, however, a special circumstance contributed.

"An old man, named Krumpholz (brother of the inventor of the harp with pedals), used to visit us nearly every evening. He was a violinist in the orchestra in the Hof Theatre, and his enthusiasm for music amounted to extravagance. Nature had endowed him with a true and delicate sense of the beautiful; and without possessing much technical knowledge, he formed a keen estimate of the merits of a composition, and would in a manner anticipate the opinion of the artistic world.

"From Beethoven's very first appearance, Krumpholz adhered to him with a pertinacity and devotion which soon made him his intimate friend; he

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<sup>1</sup> It might easily have been supposed from the intimate connection between them that Lichnowsky brought Beethoven to Vienna. But this was, as we know, not the case.

would spend almost the whole day with Beethoven, who, although very reticent about his musical plans with every one else, communicated his ideas, and played his new compositions to Krumpholz, and improvised before him every day. Beethoven often made merry over his friend's extravagant enthusiasm, and called him his fool; but he was touched by the devotion with which Krumpholz, in spite of the bitterest enmity, maintained his cause against his then numerous opponents. For, at that time, Beethoven's compositions were not in the least understood by the general public, while the old Haydn-Mozart school inveighed against them with the utmost acrimony.

"I used to play Beethoven's works every day to Krumpholz; and although he knew nothing about pianoforte playing, he was, of course, able to tell me a good deal as to the time, execution, effect, and character of compositions, which he had frequently watched from their beginnings, and heard the master himself perform. His zeal soon inspired me, and I became an equally ardent admirer of Beethoven, learnt all his works by heart, and, considering my age, played them with a good deal of skill and spirit. Krumpholz always told me what Beethoven was doing, and would sing and play on the violin the themes he had heard from him in the fore-noon. I, therefore, always knew sooner than any one else what Beethoven had in hand, and learnt also how much

time—several years frequently—he spent in polishing his works before suffering them to appear in print, and how he would employ in new compositions motives which had occurred to him years before. Our friendly relations with Krumpholz continued till his death in 1819.<sup>1</sup>

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“I was about ten years old when Krumpholz took me to Beethoven. With what joy and trembling I looked forward to the day when I was to see the great man! I have a lively recollection of it still. My father, Krumpholz and I set out one winter day from the Leopoldstadt (where we were then living), for the street called Tiefe Graben. We mounted five or six stories high to Beethoven’s apartment, and were announced by a rather dirty-looking servant. In a very desolate room, with papers and articles of dress strewn in all directions, bare walls, a few chests, hardly a chair except the rickety one standing by the Walker piano (then the best maker), there was a party of six or eight people, among whom were the two brothers Wranitzky, Süßmayer, Schuppanzigh, and one of Beethoven’s brothers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Krumpholz died May 2nd, 1817. Beethoven wrote as his epitaph the Song of the Monk, from Schiller’s *Tell*: “*Rasch tritt der Tod den Menschen an.*”

<sup>2</sup> Anton and Paul Wranitzky were orchestral managers at the Käthnerthor theatre; Süßmayer was Mozart’s last pupil; and we shall refer, as we proceed, to the violinist, Schuppanzigh.

"Beethoven was dressed in a jacket and trousers of long, dark goat's hair, which at once reminded me of the description of Robinson Crusoe I had just been reading. He had a shock of jet black hair (cut *à la Titus*) standing straight upright. A beard of several days' growth made his naturally dark face still blacker. I noticed also, with a child's quick observation, that he had cotton wool, which seemed to have been dipped in some yellow fluid, in both ears.

"He did not appear at all deaf; I was at once required to play, and as I was afraid to begin with one of his compositions, I chose Mozart's grand C major Concerto (the one beginning with chords). Beethoven soon gave signs of attentive interest, drew nearer to me, and played the orchestral melody with the left hand in the passages where I had only the accompaniment. His hands were covered with hair, and the fingers very broad, especially at the tips.<sup>1</sup> The satisfaction he showed gave me courage to play the Sonata Pathétique, which had just come out, and then *Adelaide*, which my father sang in an excellent tenor voice.<sup>2</sup> When I had finished, Beethoven turned to my

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<sup>1</sup> Frau von Gleichenstein (*née* Malfatti), born at Freiburg Br., a youthful friend of Beethoven, told me that his fingers looked as if they had been chopped off short, and were nearly all the same length.

<sup>2</sup> *Adelaide* appeared in 1797, the Sonata Pathétique in 1799.

father and said, 'the boy has talent ; I will take him as a pupil. Send him to me about once a week. But first of all get him Emanuel Bach's manual on the true art of pianoforte playing, and let him bring it with him next time.' The friends present congratulated my father on this favourable verdict, Krumpholz was in ecstasies, and my father immediately went in search of Bach's work.

"Beethoven devoted the first few lessons to scales in all the keys, and showed me (what at that time most players were ignorant of) the only good position of the hands and fingers, and especially the use of the thumb ; rules, whose full purport I only understood in after years. Then he took me through the exercises in Bach's book, making me pay particular attention to the *legato*, of which he was so unrivalled a master, but which at that time—the Mozart period, when the short *staccato* touch was in fashion—all other pianists thought impossible. Beethoven told me afterwards that he had often heard Mozart, whose style, from his use of the clavecin—the pianoforte being in his time in its infancy—was not at all adapted to the newer instrument. I have known several persons who had received instruction from Mozart, and their playing corroborated this statement.

"My father would not allow me to walk through the city alone, and always took me himself to Beethoven's, but by so doing he missed many of his own lessons ; and as it also often happened that Beet-

hoven was composing and begged to be excused, my instruction was discontinued after a time, and I was again left to work by myself.

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"In 1802 Beethoven gave his first public concert in the theatre, when he played his first Concerto in C major, and conducted his first and second symphonies, improvising in conclusion on the theme, 'God preserve the Emperor Francis.' The applause was unanimous."<sup>1</sup>

Czerny then describes his meeting with Hummel, and the impression his playing made upon him. He saw him at the residence of Mozart's widow, where musical soirées were held every Saturday, and at which Mozart's younger son, a pupil of Streicher, performed with much skill.

Czerny says, "One evening when the party was unusually large, I observed among the fashionable company a young man, whose appearance surprised me greatly. He had a common disagreeable looking face, which he twitched incessantly, and his vulgar

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<sup>1</sup> Czerny has made two or three mistakes. Beethoven gave his first public concert at the Burg Theatre on April 2, 1800. The programme contained: the new grand symphony in C, and grand septuor in E flat, performed by MM. Schuppanzigh, Schreiber, Schindlöcker, Beer, Nickel, Matauschk, and Dietzel. Beethoven played his grand pianoforte concerto in B, and improvised on "God preserve the Emperor." He had played his C concerto at his first public concerts, March 29 and 30, 1795, at the concert of the Tonkünstler-Societät (now Haydn-Verein). The second symphony, in D, was first performed March 27, 1803.



attire suggested the village schoolmaster ; but his hands offered a strange contrast, for they were covered with brilliant and valuable rings. There was music as usual, and presently this young man, who was perhaps a little over twenty, was asked to play. What a consummate master he was ! Although I had often heard Gelinek, Lipawsky, Wölffl, and even Beethoven, the playing of this unpresentable young man opened as it were a new world to me. I had never heard such exceeding brilliancy, purity, grace, and tenderness of execution, united with so much taste and fancy ; and when he afterwards performed some of Mozart's Sonatas, accompanied on the violin by Krommer, these well-known works were like a fresh revelation. Then we learned that this was young Hummel, formerly a pupil of Mozart, and now just returned from London, where he had for some time received instruction from Clementi. As far as the instruments of the time permitted, Hummel already displayed that marvellous skill which afterwards made him so celebrated."

Czerny thus compares Hummel and Beethoven—"If Beethoven's playing was distinguished by immense power, characteristic expression, unparalleled bravura and fluency, Hummel's was a model of the utmost purity, clearness, elegance and tenderness ; and as he combined the characteristics of Mozart's style with the judicious principles of the Clementi school, his execution always excited admiration. His

pre-eminence, of course, soon asserted itself ; and Beethoven and Hummel became the heads of two hostile parties. Hummel's supporters accused Beethoven of misusing the piano, of failing utterly in purity and clearness, and by his use of the pedal producing only a confused noise ; his compositions, they said, were far-fetched, unnatural, unmelodious, and contrary to rule. The Beethovenites, on the other hand, asserted that Hummel was devoid of imagination, his playing as monotonous as a barrel organ, the position of his hands spider-like, and his compositions mere elaborations of Mozart's and Haydn's motives. Hummel's playing incited me to aim at a greater degree of purity and clearness."

In 1804 Czerny was introduced by Krumpholz to Prince Lichnowsky. The Prince took a fancy to him, and Czerny used to spend some hours every morning in playing by heart whatever he asked for. Czerny had such an excellent memory that he could play perfectly, without book, everything of Beethoven's, to say nothing of other composers.

"One morning," continues Czerny, "Beethoven, who had not seen me for two years, and was vexed with my father for interrupting my lessons, came to see the Prince, and seemed very pleased with my progress. 'I have always said the boy had talent, but,' he added with a smile, 'his father was not strict enough with him.' 'Ah, Herr von Beethoven,' rejoined my father good humouredly, 'he is our only child.'

"He was pleased also with my playing at sight, putting before me the manuscript of the C major Sonata, Op. 53.<sup>1</sup>

"From that time till his death, Beethoven constantly treated me with kindness and affection. I took charge of all the corrections in his new works, and when his opera *Leonora* was produced in 1805, he allowed me to arrange it for the piano. To his suggestions about this work, I owe that facility in arranging which was afterwards of so much service to me."

Czerny makes this further reference to his intercourse with Beethoven at this time—

"My friendly relations with Beethoven continued uninterruptedly; and in 1815, when he entrusted to me the instruction of his nephew and adopted son, he came to my house nearly every day, and when he was in the humour would improvise in a manner I shall never forget."

Beethoven's high estimate of Czerny appears from the following statement, placed with Czerny's papers in the archives of the "Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde"—

"We, the undersigned, desire to testify that Charles Czerny has made such rare progress on the piano for a youth of fourteen, that both with respect to this, and to his wonderful memory, he is worthy of all en-

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<sup>1</sup> The Waldstein sonata appeared in May, 1805.

couragement, the more so as his parents have devoted their fortune to the education of their promising son.

“Vienna, Dec. 7th, 1805.

“L. S.                   LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN.”

The friendship lasted till Beethoven's death ; and in spite of much criticism on his playing, we see from “Beethoven's Letters” (Stuttgart, 1865), how kindly disposed the master was towards him and how well he spoke of him.

We may conclude with a few extracts from the “Recollections” which appeared in Cock's *Musical Miscellany* in 1852 and 1853, and in Thayer's “Life of Beethoven.” The first part relates to Mozart's playing, and the general style of execution at that time ; then Beethoven is referred to—

“As he often said, he had practised day and night in his youth, with such severe application indeed as to have impaired his health, and induced a constant tendency to hypochondria.

“The rapidity with which he examined, and the excellent manner in which he played even manuscript and full score compositions, were astonishing. In this respect no one approached him. His rendering was always precise, but sharp and impetuous. Equally good were his interpretations of the great masters ; he played Handel's oratorios, Gluck's works, and Seb. Bach's fugues marvellously and amid the heartiest signs of approbation.

“He told me once that as a boy he was neglected, and his musical education had been very bad. ‘But’ he added, ‘I had talent for music.’ It was touching to hear him say this seriously, as if no one had known it before. On another occasion the conversation turned on the celebrity of his name. ‘Ah, nonsense,’ he said, ‘I never thought of writing for fame and honour. What I have in my heart must come out ; that is why I write.’ Except during occasional seasons of depression, arising from bodily suffering, he was always cheerful, playful, full of wit and fun, and cared not what anyone thought.

“When young, Beethoven had many friends at court, and had he desired it could have lived in the grandest style. In character he resembled Jean Jacques Rousseau, but his disposition was noble, large-hearted and pure.

“About 1803, after he had composed his Piano-forte Sonata in D, Op. 28, Beethoven said to his intimate friend, Krumpholz, ‘I am but little satisfied with my work hitherto ; to-day I will strike out a new path.’ Shortly afterwards appeared the three Sonatas, Op. 29, (31,) in which we can trace the partial fulfilment of this intention.”



## CHAPTER VIII.

### I. VON SEYFRIED.



IN the account of the competition with Wölffl, there occurred the name of Ignaz Ritter von Seyfried, a young man already ranking among the better Viennese composers, and who afterwards became an excellent musician, although in the style of the "old Imperial composers," as Beethoven used to call them. Seyfried was born in 1776; and was, therefore, six years younger than Beethoven. He belonged to a family of good position, and was originally intended for the law; but talent and inclination carried the day, and he became a pupil, first of Mozart, and then of Kozeluch. For thirty years, from 1797 to 1827, he was conductor of the band at the Theatre an der Wien, for which Beethoven wrote *Fidelio*, and where he gave his first grand concert. Seyfried himself gives a description of his relations with Beethoven. The manner in which he tampered with Beethoven's "Studies" was an insult

to the memory of the great man, and an unfortunate blot on his own character ; however, in a biographical point of view, he presents us with a trustworthy and very clear picture of Beethoven, both as a man and an artist.

We begin with the introduction to a discussion of the *Missa Solennis*, Ninth Symphony, and C sharp minor Quartet, published in the *Cæcilia* in 1828, a year after Beethoven's death, and in which he thus refers to his "friendly relations for more than thirty years with the deceased," an intercourse which, from 1800 to 1806, was probably personal—

"Through this long series of years our friendship never wavered, nor was ever disturbed by even the slightest difference. Not that we both were, or ever could be, always of the same opinion ; on the contrary, we both gave unreserved expression to our feelings and convictions, without any of that reprehensible conceit and egotism which insists on its own opinions and ways of thinking as infallible. Besides, Beethoven was altogether too generous and tolerant to offend anyone by condemnation or contradiction ; he generally had a hearty laugh over what he disliked, and I think I may say with confidence that he never in his life—at least, consciously—made an enemy ; it would only be people unacquainted with his peculiarities—I refer to an early period before his deafness overtook him—who would not feel quite at their ease with him. Beethoven's rough straight-



forwardness, however, sometimes led him into imprudent behaviour towards his generally self-constituted protectors ; but this was because the honest German always had his heart on his lips, and understood everything better than politeness. Conscious of his own worth, he would never degrade himself into becoming the plaything of the idle humour of the Mæcenates, who made the name and the art of the celebrated master their boast. He was, therefore, only misunderstood by those who grudged the trouble of learning to appreciate this apparently strange character.

“While he was composing *Fidelio*, the oratorio, *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, the Symphonies in E flat, C minor, and F (Nos. 3, 5, 6), the Pianoforte Concerto in C minor and G major, and the Violin Concerto in D, we were living in the same house ; and ours being a bachelor’s *ménage*, we went together almost every day to the same restaurant, and spent many a memorable hour in confidential talk.<sup>1</sup> At that time Beethoven was bright, always ready for a joke, cheerful, brisk, and full of spirits, witty, and occasionally satirical ; he was free from physical ailment, except a weakness in the eyes he had had since a severe attack of small-pox in childhood, and

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<sup>1</sup> They did not live together during the whole time of the composition of these works, but only for part of the years 1803 and 1805 ; but the rehearsal for the performance of his works brought him much into contact with the master.

which obliged him, even in early youth, to use strong concave spectacles.<sup>1</sup> But he was not then afflicted by the loss of that sense which to a musician is most of all necessary.

“He used to play over to me on the piano, as soon as it was finished, every portion of the above-named compositions, which are now recognised as master-pieces by the whole musical world. Without giving me time to reflect, he immediately demanded my opinion, which I was able to give freely and frankly, without any fear of offending that false pride from which his nature was entirely free. I studied with the artists from his copy, the symphonies and concertos which were produced for the first time at his benefits at the theatre (1802 and 1808), the oratorio (1803), and the opera (1805); held all the orchestral rehearsals, and personally conducted the performances. He invited me to turn over for him when he played his concerto; but, good heavens! that was more easily said than done; I saw nothing but blank leaves, with a few utterly incomprehensible Egyptian hieroglyphics, which served him as guides, for he played nearly the whole of the solo part from memory, as it generally happened that he had not time to write it out in full. So he always gave me

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<sup>1</sup> This is not quite correct: Beethoven had already been ill several times, and both his sight and hearing had thereby been impaired; but the spectacles found among Schindler's relics are not very strong.

a secret sign when he was at the end of one of these unintelligible passages ; and the anxiety I could scarcely conceal lest I should fail at the important moment afforded him huge merriment, and he shook with laughter, as he recalled it at our sociable jovial supper.

“ If I were not haunted by the proverb *propria laus sordet*, I should acknowledge that he seemed to enjoy my company, was warmly attached to me, and even thought something of me.”

The latter is shown to be true by Beethoven's letters, so the postscript which Seyfried added to the “ Studies ” is of increased interest. We give some extracts which merit more wide-spread attention—

“ Before he became deaf, Beethoven was very fond of the opera, which he visited frequently, particularly the flourishing Theatre an der Wien, which was most conveniently situated for him, for he had only as it were to step from his room into the pit. Cherubini's and M  hul's works, about which all Vienna was then growing enthusiastic, were to him special attractions. He would plant himself firmly against the orchestra rail, and stand as dumb as a dunce till the last note. This was the only sign that the composition interested him ; if it did not, he would walk off at the end of the first act. It was generally difficult, often impossible, to decipher approbation or disapproval from his looks ; he was always the same, apparently cold, and very reserved in his criticism of his fellow artists,

the mind was restlessly at work within, but the outward form was like soul-less marble. Oddly enough, wretchedly bad music afforded him great enjoyment, which he displayed in roars of laughter. All his intimate friends knew that in the art of laughter he was a virtuoso of the first order; but his immediate surroundings were often not the real cause of these explosions; his own thoughts and fancies were frequently the only reason he could assign for his merriment."

The following passage also relates to the time when his hearing had not so failed as to render him incapable of conducting, between the years 1800 and 1805—

"Our Beethoven was not one of those fastidious composers whom no orchestra could please; sometimes, indeed, he was too lenient, and would not even repeat passages which went badly at the rehearsal; 'it will go better next time,' he would say. But he was most particular about expression, the small *nuances*, the numerous alternations of light and shade, and the frequent passages in *tempo rubato*, all of which he was, however, quite ready to discuss with any one. When he saw that the performers entered into his ideas, played together with increasing spirit, and captivated by the magic of his music were carried away by enthusiasm, then would his face grow bright, and with pleasure beaming from every feature, and an agreeable smile, he awarded the successful achieve-

ment with a thundering 'Bravi tutti.' This was the grandest of triumphs to a great genius, and as he frankly confessed, cast into the shade the stormy applause of a large and sympathetic audience.

"During performances at sight, the continuity of the work would be frequently interrupted by the need for corrections, but he was always patient; and if a sudden change of time, particularly in the *scherzi* of his symphonies, threw all the players into confusion, he would burst into a roaring laugh, and declare that he never expected anything else, had been aiming at that all along, and would exhibit an almost childish delight at having overthrown such well-mounted cavaliers."

In conclusion, a few particulars about the master as an artist and a man. Seyfried says—

"He was never seen out of doors without a little note book, in which he jotted down his ideas. If any one happened to remark upon it, he would parody Joan of Arc's words: 'Nicht ohne meine Fahne darf ich kommen' ('I dare not come without my banner'). He observed this self-imposed rule with a firmness characteristic of great spirits, but in other respects a truly admirable disorder reigned in his household. Books and music would be scattered in all the corners; in one place the remains of a cold snack, in another a wine bottle, on the desk the hasty sketch of a new quartet, near it the fragments of the breakfast, on the piano some scrawled pages containing a glorious

symphony in embryo, or a proof waiting for correction, private and business letters strewn the floor ; between the windows a respectable Laib Stracchino, *ad latus* the valuable wreck of a real Veronese Salami ; and then, despite this confusion, our master would take every opportunity of extolling with Ciceronian eloquence his accuracy and love of order, quite regardless of this practical contradiction. He only changed his tone when for hours, days, or even weeks, fruitless search was made for some object ; then he would blame the innocent, murmuring in a complaining tone—‘ Yes, yes, it is unfortunate ! Nothing will stay where I put it ; all my things are mislaid ; everything is done to vex me. O people, people ! ’ But the servants understood the good-natured growler, and let him grumble on to his heart’s content ; and, in a few minutes, the annoyance was quite forgotten.”





## CHAPTER IX.

*JOHANN FRIEDRICH REICHARDT.*



ABOUT the year 1809, Beethoven wrote to Breitkopf and Härtel at Leipsic, the present publishers of the complete edition of his works—"What do you think of Reichardt's letters? As yet, I have only seen fragments of his scrawl."

These "private letters" of the band-master, J. F. Reichardt, the "Spitz von Giebichenstein" of Goethe's Life, which were written during a visit to Vienna at the end of 1808 and beginning of 1809, and published in Amsterdam in 1810, are of great value with reference to our master. They are now a rare work, but they give us a complete picture of Beethoven in the first musical circles of the Kaiserstadt; in which his genius, like a ship buoyantly cresting the waves, ever arose to renewed life and strength.

Reichardt, born at Königsberg in 1752, band-master in Berlin to Frederick II. in 1775, was an intelligent man, a universal favourite, and well known both by his travels and his literary activity. After



many changes of occupation, and when the office of director of salt at Giebichenstein, near Halle, had been abolished, he became in 1808 band-master to the King of Westphalia ; and the occasion of these letters to his wife was a journey to the land of music and musicians to seek recruits for the Cassel opera. We give the following passages relating to Beethoven, with the necessary explanations and corrections—

“Vienna, November 30th, 1808.

“I have at last been to see the excellent Beethoven. They care so little about him here that no one could tell me where he lived, and I really had a great deal of trouble to find him out. At length I discovered him in a large, lonely house : he looked at first as dark as his dwelling, but soon brightened up, and seemed as pleased to see me again as I was to see him, and talked very freely and kindly on many subjects about which I wanted information. His nature is a strong one, with a cyclopean exterior, but truly affectionate, agreeable and good within. He sees a great deal of a Hungarian Countess Erdödy, who occupies the front of the large house ; but he has quite separated from Prince Lichnowsky, who lives at the top, and with whom for several years he used to reside.<sup>1</sup>

“I wished also to see the Prince and his wife ; he

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<sup>1</sup> The house was in the narrow Krugerstrasse, No. 1074 ; Beethoven lived on the first floor above the courtyard.

is an old friend, and the Princess is a daughter of the excellent Countess Thun, to whom I am indebted for most of the enjoyment of my first visit to Vienna ; but neither of them was at home, and I soon learned that the Princess lived in great retirement.<sup>1</sup>"

" December 5th, 1808.

"I was invited by a friendly affectionate note from Beethoven, who had missed seeing me, to another very agreeable dinner at Countess Erdödy's, the lady of his house. My enjoyment was almost spoiled by emotion. Imagine a very small, pretty, delicate lady of twenty-five, married in her fifteenth year, but afflicted since her first confinement with an incurable malady, and for the last ten years never out of bed for more than two or three months together. She has three charming healthy children, who hang about her like chains. Music is her only pleasure; she plays Beethoven's compositions very finely, limping from one piano to the other, her feet being still much swollen, and with it all so bright, kind, and good. This made me quite melancholy during what would otherwise have been a very cheerful repast, with six

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<sup>1</sup> Compare this with the account by Madame Bernhard, page 21. The following was the cause of the separation between Beethoven and Lichnowsky : the Prince tried to force Beethoven to play before some French officers, while staying with him at his hunting castle of Krzcsanowitz in Prussian Silesia, in the autumn of 1806. The friendship was not renewed for some years.

or eight good musical companions.<sup>1</sup> We led Beethoven to the piano, and he improvised for about an hour with such masterly power and skill, pouring out his whole soul, sounding the innermost depths, and soaring to the loftiest heights of the divine tone-art, that I was repeatedly moved to tears ; words could not express the fervour of my delight, and I hung on his neck like a happy, excited child ; I rejoiced, also, as a child over the pleasure which he and all enthusiastic spirits received from my Goethe songs."

"December 10th, 1808.

"To-day I must tell you about a splendid quartet party, which Schuppanzigh, a first-rate violinist, has started for the winter by subscription, under the auspices of the ex-Russian ambassador, Rasumowsky.<sup>2</sup> It is to meet at a private house every Thursday from

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<sup>1</sup> Countess Anna Maria Niczky was born in 1779, and married in 1796 to Count Peter Erdödy. She was therefore married at seventeen, and was at this time twenty-seven. She was one of Beethoven's most intimate friends, as is seen by his letters to her ; he always called her his "father confessor."

<sup>2</sup> This quartet party played an important part in Beethoven's life and works. The members now were : Schuppanzigh, Sina, Weiss, and Linka. By order of Rasumowsky, Beethoven had recently written the three great string quartets, Op. 59. Schuppanzigh afterwards took them to Russia, to which circumstance we in a measure owe the wonderful five last quartets ; for another Russian noble, Prince Nicolas Boriz Galitzin, arranged a quartet party in the autumn of 1822, and so, after the completion of the Ninth Symphony, from 1824 till 1827, Beethoven was employed with these quartets—his last work.

twelve to two o'clock. We were present for the first time last Thursday. The party was not large, but it consisted of sincere, earnest, attentive lovers of music, just the right audience for this most refined and agreeable of musical *réunions*. Had Haydn merely originated and promulgated the quartet form, he would have been a great benefactor to the whole musical world. It is a kind of music best of all adapted to produce sympathetic enjoyment among refined lovers of music, but is very difficult to perform to perfection, because while the whole and each individual part must be clearly distinguishable, the effect can only be thoroughly satisfactory when all the parts blend in the utmost purity and unity. And as it is a beneficent provision of nature that needs and capacities generally go hand in hand, every one derives a certain satisfaction from a performance on which he bestows all the pains in his power ; it, therefore, not unfrequently happens that the stern critic and connoisseur finds great enjoyment in such unions, from which it might have been thought his highly refined artistic nature would have repelled him.

“ But this quartet was altogether excellent, although some thought that it was better last year, when Kraft was connected with it. Herr Schuppanzigh himself has a peculiarly piquant style, most suitable for the humorous quartets of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven ; or rather which has been formed by an appropriate execution of these masterpieces. He plays the most

difficult passages clearly, although not always with absolute purity (this quality is, indeed, rarely displayed by our present virtuosi) ; he accentuates very accurately and expressively; his *cantabile*, also, is very singing and full of feeling. He is a good leader, and his able associates thoroughly enter into the meaning of the composer, but he frequently disturbs me by his execrable habit—which is universal here—of beating time with the foot, very often when there is no occasion, and from mere habit, or to heighten the *forte*. You rarely hear a *forte* and never a *fortissimo*, without vehement stampings by the leader.

“ On the first Thursday, besides a quartet by Haydn, charming, naïve, and full of good humour, and a more powerful and elaborate quartet by Mozart, Beethoven’s beautiful and clear sextet (Op. 71), with wind instruments, was performed with very fine effect. A French horn player, from the Theatre an der Wien, particularly pleased me. His fine depth of tone and the perfect purity of his semi-tones reminded me of our late excellent Thürschmidt.<sup>1</sup>

“ I shall take care not to miss hearing this beautiful quartet music, for which Herr Schuppanzigh has sent me a ticket. A few days later, Beethoven gave me great pleasure by inviting this pleasant quartet party to Countess Erdödy’s, that I might hear some of his

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<sup>1</sup> We meet with the hornist, Thürschmidt, in the life of Mozart, who made his acquaintance in Paris, and in 1789 lived with him at Potsdam.

new compositions. He played himself very firmly and well in a new trio for piano, violin, and violoncello (Op. 70, dedicated to Countess Erdödy), of great power and originality.

“An excellent performance was also given of some of Beethoven’s earlier quartets. Herr Schuppanzigh shows especial skill and facility in playing Beethoven’s difficult works, in which the violin often competes with the piano in complicated figures, and the piano with the violin in *cantabile*.

“The delicate and amiable Countess, whose cheerfulness is so touching, and her friend, another Hungarian lady, showed such hearty, enthusiastic enjoyment of every bold touch and delicate turn, that the sight of them did me almost as much good as Beethoven’s masterly work and execution. Happy the artist who can command such listeners !”

Reichardt was present shortly afterwards at an amateur concert, given in three rooms, so small that work which was really good could scarcely produce any effect. A first-rate Neapolitan guitar player was present. Reichardt says —

“This was suited to the room and to the company, who were delighted with it, yet who did not seem to feel that the effect of Beethoven’s gigantic overture to Collin’s *Coriolanus* was quite destroyed. The composer being present, the performers exerted themselves to the utmost, and the violent crashes in so small a space almost made my head split. I was

very pleased to see the good Beethoven appearing quite *en fête*, especially as he cherishes the hypochondriac fancy that everybody here persecutes and despises him. His peevishness may, indeed, have repelled many of the good-natured jovial Viennese; and those who do recognise his great talents and merit may not have sufficient kindness and tact to offer him material aid in such a manner as not to hurt the susceptibilities of the delicate, sensitive, and suspicious artist. I was often deeply grieved to see the honest, excellent man gloomy and suffering; but I am convinced that his best and most original work can only be produced during these wayward despondent moods. Those who enjoy his works should never lose sight of this consideration, and not take offence at his eccentricity and ruggedness, if they would truly admire him." On Dec. 16, Reichardt made the acquaintance of an enthusiastic devotee and friend of Beethoven, the charming and intelligent Madame Marie Bigot (*née* Kiene von Colmar). She was then twenty-two years of age, and had so delighted old Haydn that he exclaimed, "Oh, my dear child, I never made this music, it is you who compose it." And Beethoven said to her, when she had been playing one of his new sonatas, "That is not exactly the character I intended to give the piece; but go on, if it is not mine, it is better than mine."

Reichardt writes again—

"We have had another morning concert in the



small Redoutensaale. It was given by a first-rate pianist, a Madame Bigot, whose husband, an excellent and gentlemanly Berlinese, is librarian to Count von Rasumowsky. With regard to the general public, the selection of pieces was far from being appropriate, for she chose one of Beethoven's hardest concertos, and his difficult and *bizarre* variations on a peculiar theme of eight bars.<sup>1</sup> But to the connoisseur she offered thereby an additional proof of her proficiency. Even in the most difficult passages, her execution was perfectly clear and faultless, and she displayed extraordinary dexterity and certainty with the left hand. The programme consisted almost exclusively of music by Beethoven, who appears to be her patron saint. The concert commenced with a good and powerful rendering of one of his splendid symphonies, and concluded with his Herculean overture to *Coriolanus*, which sounded better in this large hall than in the little room the other day. It occurred to me that Beethoven had represented himself rather than his hero."

"December 25th, 1808.

"Last week, when the theatres were closed and the evenings devoted to public concerts, my zeal and

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<sup>1</sup> The Thirty-two Variations in C minor, written in 1806. Beethoven once found Streicher's daughter practising them, and, after listening some time, said "Who are they by?" "By you." "Am I the author of the stupid thing? Oh, Beethoven, what a donkey you have been."

determination to hear everything caused me no little embarrassment, particularly on the 22nd, when the resident musicians gave their first performance this year in the Burg Theatre, in aid of their large and excellent orphanage, and Beethoven gave his benefit concert in the large Vorstadt Theatre, at which only his own compositions were to be performed. I could not possibly miss this, so about mid-day I accepted with many thanks the kind offer from Prince Lobkowitz of a seat in his box.<sup>1</sup> There we sat from 6.30 till 10.30, in the most bitter cold, and found by experience that one might have too much even of a very good thing. But I should have been as loath to leave before the end of the concert as the good-natured and polite Prince, whose box is in the front row, quite close to the stage, the orchestra, with Beethoven as conductor, being directly below and quite close to us. Poor Beethoven, who was to receive from this concert his only pecuniary profit for the whole year—except what he gets by his compositions—met with a great deal of opposition and very little help in his preparations and arrangements. Chorus and orchestra were composed of very heterogeneous elements, and it had been found impossible to have one complete rehearsal, although all the

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<sup>1</sup> Prince Joseph Maximilian Lobkowitz, born 1772, was one of the master's warmest friends and admirers. Owing to his love of art and the theatre, he became bankrupt in 1814, and died December 15, 1816.

pieces were full of the greatest difficulties. You will, indeed, be astonished at what was performed during these four hours, all the work of this fruitful and indefatigable genius.

“First, a Pastoral Symphony, or reminiscence of country life. Each movement was very long, perfectly developed, full of gorgeous painting, and brilliant images; and this single symphony lasted as long as one of our state concerts (in Cassel).

“Then followed as a sixth piece, a long Italian scene (*ah perfido*) sung by Mdlle. Killizky, the charming Bohemian with the beautiful voice. In such bitter cold, the pretty girl could not be blamed for trembling more than singing, for we were shivering in our close boxes, wrapt in our furs and cloaks.<sup>1</sup>

“Seventh number—a Gloria with chorus and solos (from the first mass), the performance of which was unfortunately quite spoiled. Eighth number—a new Pianoforte Concerto (in G) of monstrous difficulty, but which Beethoven played marvellously well in the quickest time. In the *adagio*, a masterpiece of beautiful, sustained melody, he made the instrument sing with a deep pathos which went to my heart. Ninth number—a grand Symphony (No. 5, in C minor), fully developed and too long. A gentleman beside us declared he had noticed, at the

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<sup>1</sup> As Mdme. Schulz, Killitzschki afterwards became famous at Berlin.

rehearsal, that the violoncello part alone, which was very elaborate, occupied thirty-four pages.

"Tenth number—Sanctus, with chorus and solos ; like the Gloria, very badly performed.

"Eleventh number—a long Fantasia, in which Beethoven displayed all his masterly power ; and, last of all, another Fantasia, in which the orchestra and chorus took part (the so-called *Choral Fantasia*). The rendering of the original ideas contained in this piece was spoilt by such a complete confusion amongst the band, that Beethoven, carried away by his feelings, and quite unmindful of the place and the audience, called out to the performers to leave off and go back to the beginning. You can imagine our sensations. For the moment I wished I had had the courage to leave sooner."

"Dec. 31st, 1808.

"On a beautiful fore-noon, I took a delightful walk to Count Rasumowsky's large princely establishment, which is at a little distance from the city, and spent several pleasant hours in the forcing houses and the large garden, which now, in mid-winter, looks quite green. A slight wooden bridge, built by the Count, over one arm of the Danube, prettily joins his grounds to the Prater. I did not see him, but I found Mdme. Bigot with two of the sweetest children ; and she seems as careful and tender a mother as she is an excellent housewife. Like all artists and *savants* in the Count's employ, her husband, who is the librarian,

has very good apartments in the Palace. It is, indeed, no small merit on her part to have united the many agreeable womanly capacities, for which she is celebrated, with such high culture of her great musical talents. She kindly played to me some sonatas of Haydn and Mozart with great delicacy and true finish, and promised me, next time I came, a whole musical evening in her beautiful, bright abode. Then I am to hear her play the greatest works of her master, Beethoven. She is a native of Neuchatel (?), and only came here a few years ago, when she was married ; but she already speaks German so well that one hardly perceives that she is a foreigner.

“I have had another musical evening. First, the quartet party at Mdme. Erdödy’s, Beethoven playing in a masterly manner in the new Trios (Op. 70), in which there is a heavenly *cantabile* movement, in 3-4 time, A flat major—the loveliest and most graceful piece of writing I have ever heard by him or any other composer. My soul is still stirred by the recollection of it. He will shortly publish the trios at Leipsic.”

To this account belongs also that dated January 26th, 1809—

“Among the various kinds of music which I have heard within the last few days, and the description of which would fill sheets, for everything here lives and moves in music, I must particularly mention a very agreeable evening with Mdme. von Bigot. She had

arranged it expressly on my behalf that I might hear the great Beethoven sonatas and trios I had been talking to her about with so much interest ; also the lovely and expressive trio with the French horn, which dear Hutzler played so gloriously at the last musical party before his death, that it always rings in my ears like his tender farewell.<sup>1</sup> Mdme. von Bigot had invited the violinist, Schuppanzigh, whose distinguished talents are never better displayed than in the performance of Beethoven's music. That evening he accompanied the splendid playing of the *virtuosa* with the most piquant originality and the utmost refinement. She played five of Beethoven's grand sonatas in a masterly manner ; each seemed finer than the last, and they were in truth the blossoms of a most luxuriant art growth. In all his works there is a flood of fancy, a depth of feeling not expressible in words, only in tones, and which could come only from the heart of one living wholly in his art, dream- in of it in his waking hours, and watchful of it in his dreams."

He had heard at Streicher's, on February 2nd, a

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<sup>1</sup> According to what Reichardt says in his first letter Hutzler had recently joined the band at Cassel, but soon died of nervous fever. "Trio" must be a misprint for Duo, as pianoforte sonatas accompanied by one instrument were then called ; and the piece referred to is the Op. 17, written in the spring of 1800, for the famous French horn player, Stich, or, as he called himself, Punto, and which was received with the heartiest approbation. We shall come across it again.

“wonderfully beautiful duet for two pianos.” Then he goes on to speak of a lady, who as his “dear, good Dorothea-Caecilia,” was devoted to our master for life—

“How could I ever have imagined that a still greater pleasure of the same kind was in store for me; and yet I have had such exquisite enjoyment that words fail me to describe it. Some time ago I had heard of the wife of Major von Ertmann, of the Neumeister regiment, in garrison near Vienna, as a great pianist, who played Beethoven’s masterpieces wonderfully well. I went, therefore, in a state of great expectancy to see her at her sister’s, the wife of the young banker, Franke, who had kindly informed me of the arrival of Mdme. Dorothea von Ertmann. The first glance at the tall, commanding figure and handsome, expressive face of this noble woman raised my expectations still higher. Never did a performance of one of Beethoven’s grand sonatas more astonish me; for I had not beheld, even in the greatest *virtuosi*, such a union of power and tenderness. What a soul in every finger; what force in her equally adroit and certain hands; what power to make the instrument produce all that is beautiful in singing, speaking, and playing! And the instrument was far from being as fine a one as is frequently found here. The great artist breathed her whole soul into it, drawing from it what no one else would have been able to. You can imagine how delighted I was to find that she



would remain here some time and permit me to visit her."

On February 7th, 1809, Reichardt relates how he had visited the young poet, Stoll, in the enormous "Burgerspital" (now pulled down), and goes on to speak of the Royal copyist, Zmeskall, mentioned above in chapter V—

"In the Burgerspital lives another great lover and connoisseur of music, and friend and admirer of Beethoven, Herr von Zmeskall, a good violoncellist. He has established a new quartet party, to meet in his rooms every Sunday at noon, and who gave their first performance last week. After a good rendering of a difficult Beethoven quintet (Op. 29), we had the pleasure of hearing Frau Majorin von Ertmann play a grand Beethoven fantasia (the C sharp minor Sonata) with a degree of power, expression, and finish which delighted us all. It is impossible to imagine anything more perfect on the most perfect of instruments. It was a beautiful Streicher piano, filled with the spirit of an entire orchestra. Streicher has, by Beethoven's advice and desire, abandoned the soft, yielding, and rebounding touch of the other Viennese instruments, and substituted greater firmness and elasticity, so that the *virtuoso* who plays with power and feeling has the instrument more under his control in sustaining and resting on sounds, and for all the more delicate marks of expression. He has thereby given his pianos more importance and variety of

character, which make them satisfy more completely than any other kind the requirements of every *virtuoso* who studies something more than superficial brilliancy. His workmanship is also singularly excellent and enduring.

“The evening before, I was fortunate enough to hear Frau von Ertmann at a large party at her brother-in-law Franke’s. But on this occasion the dance that was to follow, and to which the young and handsome portion of the party looked forward with great pleasure, claimed the first consideration ; she therefore selected short and pleasing pieces to gratify the curiosity of the numerous company. But these were performed with a precision and elegance betokening great mastership ; and she wove them into a marvellous fantasia—in C sharp minor, I believe—and the most perfect of the kind that I ever heard. But such rare talent is not indigenous in Vienna. Mdme. Ertmann was a Mdlle. Graumann, from Frankfort-on-the-Maine, but she has lived several years in this artistic country, and has derived the greatest advantage from her intercourse with Beethoven.”

The last reference to musical matters which concerns us is dated February 20th, 1809—

“Last Sunday I had great pleasure in witnessing Clementi’s hearty enjoyment, and I may say astonishment, on hearing Baroness Ertmann for the first time. This was at Zmeskall’s, when she played a Beethoven quartet in her superb style, Seidler accompanying her

very finely. Clementi repeatedly exclaimed with delight 'elle joue en grand maître.' Anyone acquainted with him will know what such words mean from one who never flatters, and who is in the habit of weighing his opinions in the finest balance of the keenest criticism."

The campaign of 1809 was approaching, when Austria, in spite of political defeat, celebrated the grand "war for freedom," and our master wrote the festive A major Symphony, the seventh. The letter, dated March 27th, 1809, is worth quoting—

"I have, perhaps, not yet told you that Beethoven has declined the proposal of the Westphalian court (to Cassel) ; and that his pupil, Archduke Rudolph, Prince Lobkowitz, and Prince Kinsky have offered in the noblest and most flattering manner to guarantee him a yearly pension of 4000 gulden, merely for the sake of keeping him here. As soon as the Archduke takes possession of his bishopric (Olmütz) he will attach the great artist entirely to his service as conductor of the band."

The misfortunes of the war and the Financial Patent of 1811 defeated, in a great measure, the generous intentions of these true Mæcenates : only 800 of the 4,000 gulden were paid ; and it was only after some years that the sum of 1360 florins, or 2720 marks, was fixed upon as an annual subsidy, and which Beethoven thenceforth continued to receive till his death. Nor did he go to Olmütz. But this

practical proof of the real appreciation of his genius in Vienna was not without its effect on his art-work. His next achievement was the music to *Egmont*, and this brings us to a new element in his sphere, to a personage whose connection with Beethoven is at least worthy of consideration.





## CHAPTER X.

### BEETHOVEN'S "KLÄRCHEN."



THEODOR KÖRNER's life gives the history of his young *fiancée*, Antonie Adamberger, who so soon lost her lover in the war. "In March, 1867, while collecting material for my *Life of Beethoven*, I visited that handsome, dignified, and amiable lady, Mdme. von Arneth, mother of the well-known Austrian historian. She has been a grandmother for years, and is an excellent representative of the old art-days of Vienna. After hearing her narration, I wrote as follows—

"Antonie Adamberger, daughter of a Viennese tenor singer, well-known in Mozart's time, was born in Vienna, Dec. 31, 1790. She lost her parents at an early age, and, having the sole care of several younger brothers and sisters, at fourteen she began to study dramatic art. The poet, Heinrich von Collin undertook her education, and set her to work on Goethe's *Iphigenia*. Her first *rôle* was Aricia in

Racine's *Phædra* (by Schiller). The good-natured, light-hearted Prince Lobkowitz was her patron. Dramatic readings were at that time very much the fashion ; among those who attended them were Count Schönborn, Deinhardstein, Count von Breuner, and Beethoven.

"At the first trial of Goethe's *Egmont*, when she took the part of Clara, because the other players were too untrained for it, Beethoven came to her about the composition of the songs. He asked if she could sing. She said 'No.' 'How then can you take Clara?' 'As well as I can, and if the people hiss I must put up with it.' Beethoven looked at her in astonishment, and burst out laughing. Then she went to the piano, on which was lying her father's music : Haydn's *Creation*, Wieg's *Schweizerfamilie*, and *Waisenhaus*. Beethoven asked her if she could sing any of it. 'Yes,' she said, as well as she had been taught by her father. Turning over *Ombra Adorata*, from Zingarelli's *Romeo*, he said 'Can you sing this, too?' She replied in the affirmative. He sat down to accompany, and she sang. He neither praised nor blamed her, but said when she had finished, 'Yes, you can sing ; I will write the songs.'

"Soon after he brought her to me, when he accompanied, and she sang ; and, beyond this, I have had no personal intercourse with him"—the narrator concluded, adding, in answer to a question, "the two Mdles. Malfatti were then the prettiest girls in Vienna.

When Collin's *Wehrmann's Lieder* were given at the Redoutensaal, they and their mother sat next me."

Therese von Malfatti was the elder sister of Mdme. Gleichenstein, and a great favourite with Beethoven. The first performance of *Egmont* with Beethoven's music took place on May 24th, 1810; and this first contact with Goethe led, as we shall see, to a more intimate intercourse, which became a mighty force in Beethoven's life and work as an artist.







## CHAPTER XI.

### *BEETHOVEN AND GOETHE.*



UNDER the title *Beethoven and the Child*, the following article appeared in the *Gartenlaube* in 1870—

“A relative of the Royal Bavarian Appellrath, Dr. A . . . B . . ., who died in 1857, has sent us some particulars, found in his own handwriting among the Appellrath’s papers, concerning Bettina Brentano, the famous editress of Goethe’s *Correspondence with a Child*—

“During my university course at Landshut, I was introduced to Professor von Savigny, a man whom I can never forget. I also became acquainted with his sister-in-law, Bettina, then unmarried. A mutually warm enthusiasm for music formed a bond of sympathy between us, and I soon received the flattering request that I would instruct the young lady in harmony. The ardent zeal of my interesting pupil made this a delightful task; and we studied and composed to our heart’s content, our tastes being

harmonious. On one occasion, however, our opinions differed widely : Bettina had conceived the bold idea of composing an overture to *Faust*, and insisted on giving a predominant part to the drum ; this, of course, I could not agree to, so the daring project was stopped at the outset. But in vocal music Bettina's superiority was indisputable, and her wonderful originality displayed itself to the full. She seldom chose any words, but in a magnificent voice would sing as she composed, and compose as she sang, like an *improvisatore*. For instance, she could throw into the simple scale or a spontaneous *solfeggi* a depth of thought and feeling which made me listen spell-bound to her creative genius.

"As I could generally divine and appreciate her musical thoughts, I was able to accompany her with a harmony in accordance with her sentiments. I happily succeeded in satisfying her wishes, and at length gained her friendly regard. She afterwards favoured me with some letters which, like her conversation, referred almost exclusively to music. When singing, Bettina generally perched herself on a writing table, from whence she warbled like a cherub from the clouds.

"There was a strangeness about her whole appearance. With a small, delicate, and most symmetrical figure ; pale, clear complexion ; interesting rather than strikingly handsome features ; unfathomable, dark eyes ; and a profusion of long, black hair ; she

seemed the incarnation, or, indeed the original of *Mignon*. Disliking the caprices and tawdriness of fashion, she nearly always wore a black silk robe hanging artistically in broad folds, the slimness of her graceful figure being only indicated by a thick black or white girdle which hung down in a long end like a pilgrim's.

One evening, just as she was going to a party, she noticed for the first time that her dress was too shabby for the occasion. Resolving in an instant what to do, she sent for some black taffeta which she cut into several simple straight pieces of different lengths, fastened these together with innumerable pins, put on the familiar girdle, and went in this style to the *soirée*, where it would never have been guessed how easily the artistic-looking garment had been arranged. Visitors nearly always found her comfortably squatting on a low footstool or the window steps, with a volume of Goethe in her lap. She rarely touched any feminine work. No one who once saw would ever forget this extraordinary girl. Her fertile mind, which was ceaselessly active and full of poetic fire and fancy, united with an artless charm and boundless goodness of heart, made her irresistible. She possessed, in a very high degree, that quality common to gifted natures—generosity. Having occasion once to assist a destitute person, she seized a roll of notes, and without reflecting or stopping to count them, gave away half.

So far the narrator's account of Bettina. An extract from a letter she wrote to him from Vienna (?), the original of which is before us, may here be inserted. In her description of an interview with Beethoven she has left a sketch of this great tone-poet, which cannot be unwelcome to our readers. Considering the writer's well known hastiness, no one will be surprised that the number of the year is omitted in dating the letter (there is nothing but July 9th and the name of the place). From Bettina's very voluminous letter, the first part of which relates the *début* of a Viennese singer, we quote the following *verbatim*—

“ I only made Beethoven's acquaintance during the last few days of my sojourn there (!), and I almost missed seeing him at all, for no one would introduce me, not even those who call themselves his best friends. They were afraid of the melancholy which has so overwhelmed him that he takes no interest in anything, and is inclined to be rude to strangers. One of his fantasias, splendidly performed, had touched me to the heart ; and from that moment I felt such a yearning to see him that I was resolved to leave no effort untried. Nobody knew where he lived, for he often hides himself entirely. His dwelling is very remarkable ; in the first room we entered were two or three pianos without legs, chests containing his clothes, a chair with three legs ; in the second room was his bed, which, alike in summer and winter, consists of a straw mattress and a thin coverlet, a

wash-hand basin on a deal table, the night clothes lying on the floor. We waited here a full half-hour, for he was shaving. At last he appeared. Great as are his heart and mind, he is in person small, with a brown complexioned face, covered with pock marks, what would be called ugly ; but he has an angelic brow, arched by such noble lines of harmony that one marvels at it as at a glorious work of art ; he has black and very long hair, which he tosses back ; he looks scarcely thirty, but he does not know his age himself, and thinks he is thirty-five.

“I had heard a great deal about how careful one must be not to offend him ; but I had formed quite another estimate of his noble nature, nor was I mistaken. In a quarter of an hour he had grown so friendly that he would not leave me, and even went home with us, and, to the great astonishment of his friends, remained the whole day. He is what is called proud, and will not play to please either the Emperor or the dukes, who give him a gratuitous pension ; indeed, in Vienna it is the rarest thing to hear him at all. On my requesting him to play he said, ‘Why should I play?’

“‘Because I would most gladly fill my life with what is most glorious, and your playing will be an epoch in my life,’ I said.

“He assured me that he would try to deserve this praise, sat down to the piano on the corner of a chair, and began to play softly with one hand as if trying to

conquer his repugnance to being heard. Suddenly he forgot all his surroundings, and poured out his soul in a flood of harmony. I have become exceedingly fond of this man. In all that concerns his art he is so commanding and so true that no artist dare approach him ; but in all other circumstances of life, so naïve that one can do what one likes with him. His absent-mindedness in such matters is regularly ridiculed and so taken advantage of, that he has rarely money enough for the necessities of life. Owing to friends and brothers consuming his substance, his attire is poor ; still, his tattered appearance (let Nussbaumer take a note of this) is grand and imposing. He is also very deaf, and can scarcely see. When he has just been composing he is quite deaf, and the outer world is all confusion to him, because the whole world of harmony is working in his brain, and on it only can he fix his mind. Being deprived of sight and hearing he has lost all bond of union with the outer world, and lives in the deepest solitude. Sometimes when you have been talking to him a long time and are waiting for an answer, he will suddenly burst into music, draw out his paper and write. He is not like the bandmaster, Winter, who writes down whatever first occurs to him ; but first draws out a comprehensive plan, and arranges a certain form, according to which he works.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Winter was Court bandmaster at Munich ; he is best known as the composer of *Unterbrochene Opferfest*.

“During the last few days I was in Vienna, he visited me every evening, gave me some of Goethe’s songs which he had set to music, and begged me to write to him at least once a month, for he had no friend but me.<sup>1</sup>

“Why do I write you so detailed an account? First, because I think you will as I do appreciate and reverence such a spirit; and secondly, because people are too petty-minded to understand him, so I cannot refrain from presenting him exactly as he appeared to me. Moreover, he shows the utmost kindness towards all who confide in him on musical matters; the humblest beginner may trust to him with confidence; this man who cannot be persuaded to curtail an hour of his liberty will never tire of giving counsel and support.”

So far the *Gartenlaube*.

Bettina! Who does not know Goethe’s “child”? The above is a good description of her. Because she was the daughter of his youthful friend, Maximilian von Laroche, the poet would have esteemed her; but how much more did he value her for her mind and heart so imbued with all that is highest and most beautiful! A being so nearly allied to Goethe’s poetic temperament by the ardour of her imagination, and by nature so truly musical, could not but feel a strong affinity with Beethoven.

She had gone to Vienna with her sister, the young

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<sup>1</sup> Three letters to her appear in “Beethoven’s Letters.”



Countess Savigny, to visit the family of the famous master, Birckenstock, whose beautiful daughter was married to Bettina's brother, Franz Anton Bretano. This sister was with her when she visited Beethoven, for Savigny had been a youthful acquaintance of Beethoven at Bonn, where he had attended the university founded by Maximilian Franz. But the above letter was not written from Vienna, but Bohemia, which explains the "there" at the beginning. Bettina is wrong about Beethoven's age, which he did not himself know. This being the year 1810, he must have been thirty-nine. We know from Reichardt's account that the "dukes" were the Princes Kinsky and Lobkowitz, and the Archduke Rudolph. The playing took place at Birckenstock's, where the two sisters were staying.

It cannot be denied that Beethoven made a prodigious impression on Bettina. In no less a degree did her poetical, womanly nature captivate his strong, proud nature, and her unrivalled receptive and conceptive capacities appeal to his intellect. At the same time she came from Goethe, and was in every sense his spiritual "child." And how fully would the nature and worth of his own art be revealed to the musician when he thought of this great poet, and saw before him a real portion of his life and being! Could he fail to have the liveliest sense of the dignity and marvellous richness of his beloved art? He seems, indeed, to have gained a full consciousness and ideal

conception of it from this association. "Ah, I feel there are moments when speech is useless," he had exclaimed a few years previously to one of his "immortal beloved ones," of whom we know nothing. Now he fully recognizes the exalted character of his art, now there is a human being to whom he can express it, although at the same time she is but the medium between him and the greatest. What more natural than that, fired with enthusiasm, he should pour out in words his innermost feelings about his art? That his would be no ordinary and conventional sentiments will be readily apprehended even by one who knew nothing more of Beethoven than what we have given of these recollections of his contemporaries.

Thus arose that portion of Goethe's "Correspondence with a Child," over which, when it appeared in 1835, the "philosophy of the schools" so gravely shook its head, and which was regarded with the blankest astonishment, and condemned as "transcendentalism," if not as extravagance and absurdity.

Yet it is faithful, and is one of the finest and best pieces of writing on Beethoven, and on the nature of music generally, in spite of much awkwardness of expression in the treatment of such great subjects, and of being only such a reflex as this woman's soul could give of the artist whose mother, as Zelter said of Goethe, must have been a man. She repeated, as far as she understood them, the sentiments of this lofty spirit about his grand art, which he clothed in

language not only inadequate to his own requirements, but not sufficiently "cultivated" to give full and clear expression to such matters.

We quote the whole without abbreviation. It is one of the gems of our collection, and the fact that Goethe himself finally admitted it into his correspondence stamps it with truth and importance. She writes—

"Vienna, May 28th.

"When I had seen him of whom I will write, I became oblivious of all the world, which even now the mere recollection of him causes to disappear. My horizon spreads itself at my feet ; and I stand in a sea of light emanating from thee, and silently and swiftly I fly to thee across mountain and valley. Ah, leave all alone, shut thy dear eyes, live for a moment in me, forget the space and time that separate us. Look at me as when I saw thee last. Oh that I were in thy presence, and could tell thee of the terror which seizes me when I gaze into the world, look into the solitude behind, and see how strange it all is ! How is it that I still blossom and grow in this desert ? Whence comes the dew, the nourishment, the warmth, the blessing of the love between us which is so precious to me ? Were I but with thee that I could repay thee for all ! I would speak of Beethoven, who made me forget the world and thee ; I am, indeed, only a child, but I am not on that account wrong in saying (what, perhaps, no one yet perceives and believes) that he far

surpasses the measure of other men. Shall we ever attain to him? I doubt it. May he but live till the lofty problem of his spirit be fully solved; let him but reach his highest aim, and he will put into our hands the key to a glorious knowledge which shall bring us a stage nearer to true blessedness.

“I may confess to thee that I believe in a divine charm as an element of the spiritual nature, and which Beethoven exercises in his art: all that he can tell you of the working shows it to be pure magic; every passage is a part of a lofty organisation; and Beethoven thus feels himself *the founder of a new sensuous basis in spiritual life*. You will understand what I mean, and what the truth is. Who could replace such a mind? Human affairs go on like clock-work around him, he alone freely produces the uncreated and the unconceived: what has the world to do with such a one, who is at his sacred work from before sun-rise till long past sunset, who is totally unmindful of material wants, and whom the floods of inspiration carry far beyond the shores of dull daily life? He said himself, ‘When I open my eyes, I can only sigh, for what I see is contrary to my creed; and I must despise the world for not perceiving that music is a higher revelation than any wisdom or philosophy. It is the wine that inspires to new creations, and I am the Bacchus, who presses out this wine for men, and makes them spiritually drunken; when they are

sober they bring to shore all kinds of things which they have caught.<sup>1</sup> I have no friend, and must live alone; but I know that in my art God is nearer to me than to others. I approach Him without fear, I have always known Him. Neither am I anxious about my music, which no adverse fate can overtake, and which will free him who understands it from the misery which afflicts others.'

"Beethoven told me all this the first time I saw him; a feeling of reverence took possession of me when he expressed himself so kindly and freely to one so insignificant; I was also astonished, for I had been told that he was very unsociable, and would talk to no one. His acquaintances were afraid to take me to him, and I had to seek him out alone. He has three houses, in which he by turns hides himself—one in the country, one in the city, and the third at the Bastion, where I discovered him on the third story. I entered unannounced, and found him at the piano.<sup>2</sup> I mentioned my name,

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<sup>1</sup> It should be remembered that Beethoven had for some time been occupied with the idea of Bacchus, that is of the real Dionysos, from whose cultus his own, and all the tragic arts took their origin. In 1815, his friend, Armenda, sent him an opera called *Bacchus*, and among the sketches for a tenth symphony in 1818, we find, "In the Adagio the text of a Greek myth, *cantique ecclesiastique*, in the Allegro feast of Bacchus." The tragic element of existence had always impressed him, and he thought of representing it in a glorious work of art, but died before the realization of the plan.

<sup>2</sup> The sister and the waiting for the shaving are here forgotten. The house was on the "Mölkerbastion."

and he was very kind, and asked if I would like to hear a song he had just composed. Then he sang 'Kennst du das Land' in a sharp incisive tone, filling the hearer with the melancholy of the sentiment. 'It is beautiful, is it not?—wonderfully beautiful, I will sing it again,' he said enthusiastically. He was pleased with my lively approbation. 'Most people are affected by a good thing, but these are not artistic natures; artists are fiery, they do not weep,' he said. Then he sung another of the songs which he had composed within the last few days, 'Trocknet nicht Thränen der ewigen Liebe.'<sup>1</sup>

"He accompanied me home, and on the way talked very finely about art, but as he stood still in the street declaiming, it required some courage to listen; he talked very rapidly and passionately, and I am sure it was a wonder I did not forget the way. The large party at our house were greatly surprised to see him come in to dinner with me. After dinner he sat down to the instrument unasked,<sup>2</sup> and played long and marvellously, spurred on both by his pride and his genius; under such circumstances his mind brings forth the inconceivable, and his fingers accomplish the impossible. Since then, he has come here

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<sup>1</sup> There is an autograph copy, in England, of this and two other songs, entitled, "Three Songs, 1800, Poetry by Goethe, Music by Ludwig van Beethoven."

<sup>2</sup> In this particular also her memory is at fault; she had asked him herself.

every day, or I go to him. For his sake I neglect parties, galleries, theatres, and even St. Stephen's. Beethoven said, 'Ah, what would you see there? I will fetch you, and we will go towards evening through the walks of Schönbrunn.' Yesterday I went with him into a glorious garden, full of flowers, all the hot houses were open, and the perfume was stupefying. Standing in the full glare of the burning sun, Beethoven said, 'Goethe's poems have great power over me, not only by their matter, but by their rhythm; and I am moved to composition by their language, and by the lofty spirit of harmony pervading them. Melodies radiate from the forms of inspiration, I pursue them, and passionately bring them back; I see them disappear in the varied mass of emotions, then I seize them with renewed ardour, and cannot let them go; in hasty delight, I develop them in all their modulations, and in the end triumph over the production of a musical thought—a symphony; yes, *music is the medium between the spiritual and sensuous life*. I might say with Goethe, if he would understand me, *melody is the sensuous life of poetry*. Is not the intellectual meaning of a poem represented in sensuous feeling by melody—is not the sensuous element in the song of Mignon realized through the melody? and does not such emotion call forth new creations? Then will the mind expand into boundless universality, where everything unites to cherish the feelings



excited by a simple musical thought, and which would otherwise perish unnoticed : it is harmony which speaks in my symphonies, the fusion of many forms into a compact whole. We feel, then, that that there is something eternal and incomprehensible in everything spiritual ; and although I have always a sense of success in my works, I feel a constant hunger, which seems for a time appeased by composition, but which invariably returns. Speak to Goethe of me ; tell him he must hear my symphonies, and he will agree with me that *music is the only spiritual entrance to a higher world of knowledge*, comprehending but not comprehended by mankind.

“A sense of rhythm is necessary to the comprehension of the nature of music, which has presages of the highest knowledge ; its sensuous representations are the embodiment of intellectual revelations. Although the soul lives on it as bodies do on air, it is another thing to comprehend it ; but the more the soul draws its sensual nourishment from it, the closer will be its union. But few attain to this, for as thousands marry for love, without love ever revealing itself to them, although they all profess it, so thousands are conversant with music, yet know not its secret. A lofty moral sense lies at the basis of music as of every art ; every true invention is another step in moral progress. It is the unique principle of art that it can submit to its own inscrutable laws, and curb and guide the spirit of these laws, so that it may pour out

its own revelations ; to find redemption and relief in the latter is the impulse towards the divine, that element which rules the fury of uncurbed forces, and thus gives imagination its fullest scope. Thus *art always represents the divine*, and man's relation to it is religion ; what we achieve through art is God's gift of an aim for human endeavour to strive after.<sup>1</sup>

“ ‘ We know not how far knowledge helps us ; the firm, compact grain of corn needs the warm, damp, electric soil in which the mind lives, thinks and works. Philosophy is a sediment of the electric spirit ; its requirements—all based on a fundamendal principle—are fully satisfied by music ; and although the mind is inferior to what it produces, it glories in its production, and thus every *true work of art is independent of and greater than the artist* ; as soon as it appears it returns to the divine, and its only connection with the human is to testify to the presence of the divine.

“ ‘ Music supplies the element of harmony. Even in an isolated thought the mind perceives a sense of connection, so every musical thought is in indissoluble union with the whole harmony.

“ ‘ Everything electric incites to musical production.

“ ‘ I am an electric nature. I must cut short my

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<sup>1</sup> The latter part of Beethoven's life, and his last art work, especially the Ninth Symphony and the last quartets, are an ample and noble confirmation of this statement. His biography refers to this more particularly.

lucubrations, or I shall miss the rehearsal. Write about me to Goethe, if you understand me. I cannot reply, but I would gladly learn of him.'

"I promised him to write all as far as I could. He took me to a grand rehearsal with a full orchestra ; and I sat alone in a large dark box, with occasional gleams of light, in which danced circles of bright sparks, streaming through chinks and holes.

"Then I saw this giant spirit lead his forces.<sup>1</sup> Oh Goethe, *no king, no emperor ever had such a consciousness of power, and of being the centre from which all might emanates, as this Beethoven has.* He stood there with such firm determination ; his countenance and every gesture proclaiming the completion of his work, in which nothing had been left to chance, every fault and blemish guarded against, and the impress of his great mind stamped on its minutest details. One might prophecy that at the end of all things, such a spirit would re-appear as a ruler of the world.

"I wrote all this down yesterday evening, and when I read it to him this morning he said, 'Did I say that? I must have been crazy.' He went through it

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<sup>1</sup> Would not this be a rehearsal for *Egmont* which was first given with Beethoven music, May 24th, 1810? In the overture, the "giant spirit" is indeed plainly perceivable ; but could Bettina have forgotten if it had been a rehearsal of one of her Goethe's works?

attentively, scratching out and interlining, for he is anxious that you should understand him.<sup>1</sup>

"Let me have the pleasure of receiving a speedy answer, which will prove to Beethoven that you appreciate him. It has always been our plan and my wish that we should talk about music, but Beethoven has made me feel for the first time how little I know about it.

"BETTINA.

"My address is Herr Birkenstock, Erdbeergasse. Your letter will reach me in a fortnight."<sup>2</sup>

We subjoin Goethe's reply. His broad views and clear perception of matters, which, as he confessed, surpassed his intuitive understanding, give a striking proof of the rare power of his mind, which anticipated artistic possibilities, comprehended only by the present age because it sees them realized. Nothing in the older æsthetic literature so clearly points to Richard Wagner's tragico-musical creations, as does this reply of Goethe to the "hasty effusion" of his "child." For the sake of perceiving the anticipation

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<sup>1</sup> This MS. has not yet been discovered. Beethoven's friend, Dr. Wegeler of Bonn, writes about this time: "If instead of giving his lessons, Beethoven would take refuge with Madame von Breuning, or indulge in any other so-called freak of genius, the good lady, who was quite a mother to him, used to say with a shrug, 'He is mad again to-day.'"

<sup>2</sup> The street in the Vorstadt Landstrasse is called Erdberg-gasse.

of a future increased and enduring greatness, which pervaded the profounder minds of that day, it is important and interesting to recall the noteworthy testimony of the greatest of German poets. It sounds quite prophetic. Goethe writes—

“Your letter, dearest child, reached me opportunely. You have taken a great deal of pains to represent a fine grand nature, its achievements and its struggles, its needs as well as its superabounding genius ; and I have had much pleasure in beholding the image of this truly gifted being. Without trying to classify it, a psychological calculation is necessary to ascertain the real measure of our accordance with it ; meanwhile I will confess that this nature, as far as indicated in your hasty effusion, does not repel but attract me. The ordinary intellect would, perhaps, feel an utter want of sympathy ; but the unlearned should reverence what such a genius utters. Whether it speak from feeling or knowledge is a matter of indifference, for in it the gods preside, and scatter the seeds of future wisdom, which it is only to be hoped may reach maturity. The clouds must be dispersed from men’s minds, before these seeds can be universally disseminated.<sup>1</sup>

“Say all that is kind to Beethoven from me, and that I would willingly make a sacrifice for the sake of

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<sup>1</sup> Here the old prophet saw only two clearly. But after Beethoven’s mighty thunderings, his own sunny, poetical powers, were the chief factors in the dispersion of these clouds.

becoming acquainted with him ; for an interchange of thought and feeling could not but produce the happiest results. Perhaps you can persuade him to go to Carlsbad, where I am nearly every year, and where I should have most leisure for hearing him and learning of him. *It would be sacrilege for a wiser than I am to think of teaching him ; his genius, like an electric flash, often gives him light while we are sitting in darkness, and can scarce tell whence the day will dawn.*<sup>1</sup>

"It would give me great pleasure if Beethoven would send me a clearly, nicely written copy of his setting of my two songs, which I am very anxious to hear ; and I should be very thankful for the keen enjoyment it would afford me, if, through a melody, I were to obtain (as Beethoven rightly imagines) a fresh realization of the spirit of these early poems.

"In conclusion, again I thank you most heartily for your letter, and all the good you do me. You succeed so well with everything you touch, and draw from it such instructive and delightful enjoyment, that what more could be desired than that you may thus continue for ever ; for ever also as regards me, who

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<sup>1</sup> I must refer the reader to the *Life of Beethoven* for fuller information about the meeting at Teplitz, in the summer of 1812, as also for showing the manner in which Beethoven, in the further development of his art "gave light like an electric flash," with regard to which I would mention chapters 9, 10 of vol. iii, and the article "Gluck and Wagner."

am far from insensible of the privilege of being reckoned among your friends. Be as faithful as you have hitherto been, amid frequently changing and brightening circumstances.

“The Duke sends kind regards, and hopes that you will not quite forget him. I shall perhaps hear from you again at Carlsbad at the ‘The Three Moors.’

“June 6th, 1810.

“G.”

To this Bettina sent the following reply, which is quite in accordance with Beethoven’s nature and character; for with regard to a really great man, Junker’s words are as true now as always, “he is modest.” Bettina writes to Goethe—

“Dearest Friend,—I read your beautiful letter to Beethoven; he was delighted with the portion referring to himself, and exclaimed, ‘If any one can assist him in comprehending music, I can.’ He caught enthusiastically at the idea of meeting you at Carlsbad, clapping his hand to his head, he cried, ‘Could I not have done so before? I indeed often thought of it, but gave it up through timidity, from which I frequently suffer most unmanly tortures, but I shall not be afraid of Goethe any more.’ You may count upon seeing him next year.”

In conclusion, I quote, as significant of the deep impression which Beethoven made upon her, the following passage, which also appeared in a letter in the *Gartenlaube*, in July—



“A short time ago I was in Vienna, in the midst of the ceaseless activity and excitement of that great city : we passed the glorious spring days in walking about with our friends. Each day brought a fresh pleasure, and every pleasure afforded matter for interesting correspondence. But more than all to me was Beethoven, whose superhuman intellect leads us into an unseen world, and so quickens the springs of life that we are carried out of our narrow selves into a vast spiritual universe. Would that he were here to silence with his voice the endless chirrup of the crickets, who constantly remind me of my solitude !”





## CHAPTER XII.

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### "FIDELIO."



N the master's life, as in his art, a manifold and important part is played by his "dramatic kingdom of pain," *Fidelio*. We shall presently come to the period when his genius for true dramatic art was kindled by this work ; we feel, therefore, exceedingly fortunate in possessing the original account by a contemporary of the first appearance of the opera. Friedrich Treitschke, uncle of the present famous political historian was for years manager and librettist of the two Imperial theatres in Vienna, and in 1841 he published the following recollections in the musical annual "Orpheus."

"Towards the end of 1804, Freiherr von Braun, the new proprietor of the Royal and Imperial Theatre an der Wien, proposed to Beethoven, then in the prime of youthful strength, to write an opera for his stage. The oratorio, *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, had awakened the belief that the master was capable of



as great things in dramatic as in instrumental music. In addition to an honorarium, he was offered free lodging on the premises of the theatre. Joseph Sonnleithner<sup>1</sup> undertook to write the libretto, and selected the French work, *L'Amour Conjugale*, although it had already been arranged by Gaveaux, and composed by Paer, to Italian words under the title of *Leonora*, and both versions had been translated into German. However, Beethoven did not fear his predecessors, and went heart and soul into the work, which he pretty well finished by the middle of 1805.

"In the meantime, considerable difficulties arose about the performance. The female rôles could only be taken satisfactorily by Mdlles. Milder and Muller; the men's parts left still more to be desired; there were also many defects in the text; while in the distance could be heard the rumblings of the approaching war-storm, which would destroy the quiet necessary for the enjoyment of a work of art. Every effort was, therefore, made to fill the house; *Fidelio* was to do wonders, and so the opera was brought out on November 20th, under any but happy auspices. We found to our regret that the work was in advance of its time, and little understood by friends or enemies. It was given on three successive days, and then not repeated till March 29th, 1806. Some unimportant

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<sup>1</sup> J. Sonnleithner, a lawyer by profession, was theatrical secretary. We shall meet him again.

changes, such, for instance, as the division of the first part into two instead of three acts, could not remove the first adverse impression. It was performed once more on April 10th, and then consigned to the dust of the theatre library. Simultaneous attempts on provincial stages met with no better success.

“Fully eight years after, the superintendents of the Royal and Imperial Opera, Saal, Vogl, and Weinmüller, were seeking for their benefit performance a work that would cost them nothing. It was a difficult task. They had no new German compositions, and little profit was to be expected from the old ones. The latest French operas had deteriorated in quality, and declined in popularity, and the actors had not the courage to throw themselves into the Italian works as mere singers, as they suicidally did a few years later. Amid these embarrassments *Fidelio* was thought of, and Beethoven applied to for the loan of the work, which he granted with the utmost disinterestedness, but on the express condition that several alterations should be made. For these he requested my humble assistance. I had been well acquainted with him for some time, and in my two-fold capacity of librettist and manager, his wish became my pleasing duty.”

After describing the technical alterations, Treitschke continues :—“The second act presented formidable difficulties at the commencement. Beethoven wished to give an aria to poor Florestan, but I urged that a man almost dead with hunger could not possibly

sing bravura. We made various experiments with the poetry; at length, in his opinion, I hit upon the right thing. I wrote words descriptive of the last flickering of the vital flame before it is extinguished—

Und spür' ich nicht linde, sanft säuselnde Luft  
Und ist nicht mein Grab mir erhellet?  
Ich seh', wie ein Engel, im rosigen Duft,  
Sich tröstend zur Seite mir stellet.  
Ein Engel, Leonoren, der Gattin, so Gleich,—  
Der führt mich zur Freiheit,—ins himmlische Reich.

“What I am now going to relate will ever live in my memory. Beethoven came to me about seven in the evening. After talking of other things, he asked how the aria was getting on? It was just ready. I handed it to him. He read it, walked up and down the room, murmuring and humming as he usually did, instead of singing, and threw open the piano. My wife had often vainly asked him to play; but now, putting the text before him, he began a wonderful phantasy, which it were a pity no magic pen could retain. He seemed to conjure from it the motive of the aria. Hours passed, but still Beethoven continued his phantasy. Our supper, which he was to share, was brought in, but he would not be disturbed. When quite late he embraced me, and excusing himself from the meal, hurried home. The next day the music was ready.

“As soon as the book was finished—towards the end of March—I sent a copy of it to Beethoven, from

whom in a day or two I received the following complimentary acknowledgment—

“ ‘Dear Good Treitschke,

“ ‘I have read your improved version with great pleasure. It has determined me to rebuild the deserted ruins of an old castle.

“ ‘Your friend,

“ ‘BEETHOVEN.’

“The beneficairees were pushing on the completion of the opera, in order to avail themselves of the best season of the year; but Beethoven progressed only slowly. To a note from me he answered, ‘The opera is the most troublesome business in the world. I am dissatisfied with nearly the whole of it, and there is scarcely a piece I have not had to patch here and there to make it seem a little better if possible. There is a great deal of difference between working from cool reflection, and abandoning one’s self to inspiration.’

“The rehearsals began in the middle of April, although much was still wanting to the work. The performance was announced for May 23rd; the grand rehearsal was fixed for the day before, but the new overture (in E flat) promised, was still in the brain of the composer. The orchestra was summoned for rehearsal on the morning of the day of performance. Beethoven did not come. After waiting a long time, I went to fetch him. He was in bed fast asleep, a

goblet of wine with a biscuit in it beside him, and the sheets of the overture scattered over the bed and floor. The exhausted lamp showed that he had been working far into the night. The completion was evidently impossible, his overture to *Prometheus* was substituted, and from the announcement that circumstances have occurred to postpone the overture for to-day, the large assemblage easily guessed the cogent reason.

"You know what followed. The opera was excellently rehearsed, Beethoven conducting; and although his enthusiasm often made him break the time, the bandmaster, Umlauf, stood behind him guiding with eye and hand. The applause was great, and increased with each representation. Beethoven had had the profits of the seventh, which took place on July 18th, instead of an honorarium. He added on this occasion, for the sake of greater attractiveness, two pieces, a song for Rocco and a grand air for Leonora; but as they retarded the rapid progress of the plot, they were afterwards omitted. The receipts were again very good."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The pieces were, the song "Gold ist eine Schöne Sache," and Leonora's air, "Komm Hoffnung, lass den letzten Stern des Müden nicht erbleichen," which was merely altered.





## CHAPTER XIII.

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### *MOSCHELES.*



THE following notice is by one who, although a noted musician, failed, like his greater contemporary F. Mendelssohn Bartholdy, to comprehend the lofty spirit of the master. He had no intuitive knowledge of the poetry of music, but, by a single act and impulse he has rendered himself worthy of a lasting place among Beethoven's friends and worshippers—the prompt and effectual help which his undoubted love and reverence for Beethoven prompted him to render to him in his last days and when on his death-bed. As we shall hear more of this, these little personal details are valuable.

Ignaz Moscheles was born at Prague in 1794. Inclination led him to music, but chance, which so often plays a leading part in life and education, kept him widely separated in his earliest student days from the master who represented the highest poetry of the art. “Who is there besides Mozart, Clementi and

Bach? Only crazy, hare-brained fools, who turn young people's heads. Beethoven, clever as he is, writes a great deal of extravagant nonsense, and leads people astray." So said his teacher, Dionisius Weber, of Prague, one of the "old German Imperial composers."

When Schindler's "Biography of Beethoven" appeared in the beginning of 1840, Moscheles translated it into English, and added the following notice about himself—

"In 1809 my lessons with Weber terminated, and, having lost my father, I chose Vienna as my residence in order to prepare myself for a musical career.

"I longed above all to see and become acquainted with the man who had exercised such a powerful influence over me, and whom, though I scarcely knew, I blindly worshipped. I heard that Beethoven was very difficult to approach, that he took no pupils but Ries, and for a long time my desire to see him was unsatisfied. But in 1810, the long-wished-for opportunity arrived. One morning, I was at D. Artaria's, where some of my first compositions had just been published, when some one entered, with short hasty steps and with downcast eyes, as if wishing to pass unnoticed, walked straight through the circle of ladies and gentlemen who were talking of business and musical matters, into the private office behind the shop. Artaria directly afterwards

called me in and said, 'this is Beethoven,' and to the composer, 'this is the young man I was speaking to you about.' Beethoven nodded kindly and said he had just heard a good account of me. He did not reply to a few stammered words of admiration, and seemed to wish to cut short the interview. I crept away with my desires more unsatisfied than before this meeting, thinking to myself, Am I then really so insignificant that he could not even put a single question to me about music, or desire to know who my teacher was, and whether I had any knowledge of his works? The only satisfactory explanation of such a slight was Beethoven's deafness, for I had observed that Artaria spoke straight into his ear. But I resolved that the more I was excluded from the private intercourse I had so earnestly desired, so much the more zealously would I acquaint myself with all the productions of Beethoven's genius. I never missed the Schuppanzigh Quartets, at which he was frequently present, or the delightful concerts in the Au-gardens, where he conducted his own symphonies. Sometimes also I heard him play, which, however, he rarely did either in public or private. The compositions which most impressed me were :—the Fantasia, with choral and orchestral accompaniment, and the Concerto in C minor. I met him several times at the houses of his two friends, Zmeskall and Zizius, whose musical *réunions* first attracted public attention to Beethoven, but

instead of becoming more intimately acquainted with the great man, I had, for the most part to content myself with a distant recognition."

We add some explanatory remarks.

We heard of the Royal copyist, Zmeskall, in Madame Bernhard's recollections. Dr. Zizius, born in 1772, and, like Moscheles, a Bohemian, was professor of Political Sciences, and in comfortable circumstances in his youth. As a warm lover of music and an accomplished man of the world, he gathered around him the best artists, and a very select circle from the aristocratic and middle classes ; his assemblies had such a high-class tone, that an ardent amateur, the advocate Leopold Sonnleithner, says, from personal experience, the artist and the listener alike were proud to belong to them. But we know that it was not there that Beethoven first "attracted public attention."

Another notice of the same period gives the following extract from Moscheles's journal, which was published in his life :—"As a matter of course the great Beethoven was the object of my deepest veneration. Having so exalted an opinion of him, I could not conceive how the ladies of Vienna had the courage to invite him to listen to their musical performances, and to play his compositions before him. But it must have pleased him, for he was often to be seen at such evening gatherings. His unfortunate deafness had perhaps deprived him of

pleasure in his own playing, so he entrusted his new compositions to the hands of these ladies. Calling one day on the bandmaster, Salieri, whom I did not find at home, I was greatly astonished to see written on a slip of paper lying on the table, in large bold characters, 'the pupil Beethoven has been here.' This made me think,—If Beethoven can still learn of a Salieri, how much more then can I! Salieri had been a pupil and a most ardent admirer of Gluck, but it was known that he did not appreciate Mozart and his works. However, I went to him became his pupil, and was three years as his deputy assistant at the opera, which procured me a free pass to all the theatres. Those were happy busy days in dear old Vienna."

This appointment, and the practising work resulting from it, brought Moscheles into closer connection with the master, to which he thus refers in the English translation of "Schindler's Biography"—

"When Artaria undertook, in 1814, to publish a pianoforte arrangement of *Fidelio*, he asked the composer if I might prepare it. He consented on condition that he saw every number before it went to the press. Nothing could have pleased me better, for I regarded this as the long desired opportunity of approaching the great man, and profiting by his conversation. He treated me with the kindest consideration during my repeated visits, which I sought to multiply by every possible excuse. Although his

increasing deafness was a great hindrance to our conversation, he gave me several instructive hints, and played those portions himself which he wished arranged in a special manner. I made a duty of not putting his kindness to too severe a test, as my numerous visits robbed him of his precious time. But I used to see him at Mälzl's, where he often discussed the various plans and models for a metronome which the latter was constructing, and to talk over the *Battle of Vittoria*, which he was composing at Mälzl's suggestion."<sup>1</sup>

His further remarks about Beethoven's reserve in speaking on musical matters need not be recorded. An extract from his diary for 1814 may, however, interest us, as again showing the master's thorough independence:—"When I came early in the morning to Beethoven's, he was still in bed. He happened to be in remarkably good spirits that day; he jumped up, and placed himself, just as he was, at the window overlooking the Scotch bastion to examine the pieces arranged. Of course a crowd of street boys collected under the window, till he exclaimed, 'What do the confounded youngsters want?' I pointed smiling to his own figure, 'Yes, yes, you are right,' he cried, and quickly threw on a dressing gown.

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<sup>1</sup> Johann Nepouk Mälzl, born at Regensburg, 1772, the inventor of the metronome, was also the instigator of Beethoven's first battle music poem, which was afterwards developed into "Wellington's Conquest at Vittoria."

“When we came to the last grand duet, ‘Namenloser Freude,’ to which I had written the words ‘Ret-terin des Gat-ten’ below, he marked them out, and wrote ‘Rett-erin des Gatt-en,’ as *t* could not be sung. Under the last piece I had written ‘Finis by God’s help.’ He was not at home when I left it, and he sent it back with ‘O man, help thyself,’ written underneath.”

There are a few lines more about the Schuppanzigh Quartet:—“I sat beside Spohr, and we exchanged opinions on what we had heard. Spohr spoke with great energy against Beethoven and his imitators,” writes Moscheles. And this brings us to the record of this famous violinist, and most meritorious teacher and composer, who, though he failed to fully recognize the character and importance of his great contemporary, deserves honour for what he did in the beginning of 1840 for that contemporary’s true successor and spiritual pupil, R. Wagner.

The latter writes in 1851 about *The Flying Dutchman*:—“The old master, Spohr, had rapidly arranged a performance of this opera at Cassel. Although this was done entirely without my instigation, I doubted whether I should obtain Spohr’s favour, as I could not see how my youthful taste would harmonize with his. How great then was my astonishment and agreeable surprise at receiving from this worthy and venerable master, who stood coldly aloof from the modern musical world,



a letter expressive of his perfect sympathy, which he ascribed solely to the great pleasure he had in meeting a young artist, who was undoubtedly in earnest about art! Spohr, the veteran, was the only German bandmaster who received me kindly, did the best he could for my works, and remained faithful and friendly under all circumstances." It is always a pleasure to find such a man in Beethoven's circle.





## CHAPTER XIV.

SPOHR.



LOUIS SPOHR arrived at the Imperial city in the autumn of 1812. He says in his Autobiography—

“Immediately after my arrival in Vienna I visited Beethoven, but not finding him at home, merely left my card. However, I hoped to meet him at some of the musical parties, to which I had numerous invitations, but soon learned that Beethoven had entirely withdrawn from such *réunions*, for his deafness had so much increased that he could not hear music readily or clearly, and he had become exceedingly shy of society. I therefore tried another visit, but again in vain. At last I met him accidentally at the restaurant, where I dined every day with my wife. I had already given a concert, and twice conducted my oratorios, for which the Vienna paper had noticed me favourably ; Beethoven,

therefore, knew who I was when I introduced myself, and greeted me with unusual friendliness. We sat at the same table ; Beethoven was very talkative, which greatly surprised the company, as he generally sat silent and gloomy ; but conversing with him was hard work, for one had to shout loud enough to be heard three rooms off. After this, he frequently came to this restaurant, and visited me also at my house ; thus we soon became good friends. Beethoven was a little abrupt, not to say rough, but a pair of sparkling honest eyes gleamed under his shaggy eyebrows.

“After my return from Gotha, I met him occasionally at the Theatre an der Wien, close behind the orchestra where Count Palfy had given him a free seat. When the opera was over he usually accompanied me home, and spent the rest of the evening at my house. He would then be very friendly with Dorette and the children. He seldom talked about music ; when he did, his opinions were so decided as to admit of no contradiction ; he did not take the least interest in other people’s productions, and I had not the courage to show him mine. His favourite topics were at that time the two theatrical establishments of Prince Lobkowitz and Count Palfy, which he keenly criticized. Before even we were out of the theatre, he would abuse the latter so loudly as to be heard, not only by the departing audience, but by the Count himself in his bureau ; this greatly

embarrassed me, and I always endeavoured to change the subject.<sup>1</sup>

“Beethoven’s rough repellant behaviour at that time was caused partly by his deafness, which he had not yet learnt to bear submissively, partly by the disordered condition of his affairs: he was far from being a good manager, and had the further misfortune of being robbed by those around him; he therefore frequently wanted necessities. During the early part of our friendship, he was once absent for several days from the restaurant, and I asked him if he had been ill. ‘My boot was, and as I had only the one pair, I was a prisoner at home,’ was the reply. From this distressing position his friends, after a time, relieved him in the following manner—

“Beethoven’s *Fidelio*, which met with very scanty success in 1804 (1805), amid the unfavourable circumstance of the French occupation of Vienna, was now again brought forward by the managers of the Kärthnerthor Theatre for their benefit performance. Beethoven was induced to write a new overture (the one in E), a song for the jailor, and the grand aria for *Fidelio* (with the horn obbligato), and to make some further alterations.<sup>2</sup>

“In this new form, the opera had a great success,

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<sup>1</sup> Spohr was engaged by Palfy as bandmaster at the Theatre an der Wien.

<sup>2</sup> Compare this with chapter XII., “*Fidelio*.”

and during a long series of representations drew crowded audiences. On the first night the composer was repeatedly called for, and now again became the object of universal attention. His friends made use of this favourable opportunity to arrange a concert at the great Redoutensaal for the performance of his latest composition. All available string, wind, and vocal forces were invited to co-operate, and not one of the great artists in Vienna was absent. I, of course, joined with my band, and for the first time I saw Beethoven conducting. Although I had heard a great deal about this, I was very much astonished by what I saw; Beethoven had accustomed himself to indicate the marks of expression by all kinds of peculiar movements. Whenever a *sforzando* occurred, he would vehemently open both arms, which had before been crossed on his chest. For a *piano*, he would bend down, and the softer it was to be the lower would he stoop; for a *crescendo*, he would draw himself up more and more, till at the arrival of the *forte*, he gave a leap into the air; he would frequently scream out to increase the *forte*, without being aware of so doing.

“Seyfried, to whom I expressed my astonishment at this strange behaviour, related a serio-comic accident which occurred at Beethoven’s last concert at the Theatre an der Wein (1808).

“Beethoven was playing a new pianoforte concerto of his own, but at the beginning of the first *tutti*,

forgetting that he was the soloist, he jumped up and began to conduct in his usual style. At the first *sforzando* he flung out his arms so violently as to extinguish both the lights on the piano desk ; the audience laughed, and he was so put out by the disturbance, that he made the orchestra leave off, and recommence. Seyfried, fearing lest the mishap would again occur when the same passage was repeated, sent for two choir boys to stand by Beethoven and hold the candles ; one of them unsuspectingly drew near to look over the pianoforte part ; when the fatal *sforzando* arrived, he received such a smart slap in the face from Beethoven's right hand, that he dropped his light in terror ; the other boy, more cautious than his companion, had been anxiously following Beethoven's every movement, and by suddenly stooping, escaped the blow. If the audience had laughed heartily before, they now bust into a truly Bacchanalian roar. This threw Beethoven into such a rage that he broke half a dozen strings at the first chords of the solo. All the efforts to restore quietness and attention were for the time fruitless. The first *allegro* of the concerto was, therefore, quite lost. After this accident, Beethoven would never give another concert.

“But the one arranged by his friends achieved a brilliant success. Beethoven's new compositions met with unusual favour, especially the symphony in A major (the 7th), the wonderful second move-

ment being encored ; this also made a deep impression on me.<sup>1</sup>

“The performance was most masterly, in spite of Beethoven’s uncertain and often absurd manner of conducting. It was quite clear that the poor deaf master could no longer hear the *piani* of his music : this was particularly striking in the second part of the first *allegro* of the Symphony, in which occur two successive pauses, the second *pianissimo*. Beethoven had probably forgotten them, for he recommenced beating before the orchestra had reached the second pause : he was therefore unconsciously ten or twelve bars in advance, when the orchestra went on again. The passage being *pianissimo* after his usual style of indicating *pp*, Beethoven had disappeared under the desk. With the following *crescendo* he was again visible, and gradually rose higher and higher, till when, according to his reckoning the *forte* should begin, he made a spring ; the *forte* failing to appear, he looked round horrified, stared in amazement at the orchestra, who continued playing *pianissimo*, and only recovered himself, when the long-expected *forte* at length arrived and became audible to him.

“Happily this comical scene did not take place during the performance, for the public would inevitably have laughed.

“As the hall was filled to overflowing, and the ap-

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<sup>1</sup> *The Battle of Vittoria*, referred to previously by Moscheles, was also performed.



plause was enthusiastic, Beethoven's friends arranged for another concert, of which the receipts were almost equally good. For a time, therefore, Beethoven was relieved from pecuniary embarrassments, which, however, recurred several times before his death, from similar causes.<sup>1</sup>

"Hitherto no diminution in Beethoven's creative powers had been perceptible ; but his ever-increasing deafness prevented him from hearing any music, and this could not but have a prejudicial effect on his imagination. His ear could no longer guide him in his constant strivings after originality and new forms. Was it, then, wonderful that his works should become more and more strange, incoherent, and incomprehensible ? There are, indeed, people who imagine they understand them, and in their delight place them far above his earlier masterpieces. I am not among the number of such, and freely confess that I have never been able to acquire a taste for Beethoven's later works. I even rank among these, the greatly-admired Ninth Symphony, the three first movements of which are, in spite of occasional flashes of genius, worse than anything in the eight earlier symphonies,

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<sup>1</sup> Of these we shall hear further, and we shall see that the causes were other than what Spohr supposed ; his opinions on other matters are those of a prejudiced, narrow-minded band-master and "old German Imperial composer," and it is now most interesting to have a near view of the "Anti-Wagnerite" of that day ; for we know that the (indisputably) greatest of Beethoven's creations has yet to come.

while the fourth movement seems to me so monstrous, so devoid of taste, and in the conception of Schiller's Ode so trivial, that I have never been able to comprehend how such a genius as Beethoven could have written it. It confirms what I had already noticed at Vienna, that Beethoven was wanting in æsthetic culture and in a sense of the beautiful.

“When I became acquainted with Beethoven, he had discontinued to play either in public or private, so I had only a single opportunity of hearing him when I was accidentally at his house during a rehearsal of a new [?] trio (D major, 3-4 time). This was no pleasure, for in the first place, the piano was very much out of tune, which was of very little consequence to Beethoven for he could not hear it; and secondly, the artist's deafness had left little trace of his once famous powers as a *virtuoso*. The poor deaf-man played the *forti* so loudly that the strings clattered, and the *piani* so softly that whole groups of notes were inaudible, thus rendering an understanding of the work impossible unless one could look over the piano part. The contemplation of so hard a fate, made me profoundly melancholy. If deafness be a heavy misfortune to an ordinary man, how is a musician to bear it without despairing? Beethoven's constant gloom no longer seemed a mystery to me.”

By a variety of decisive proofs we shall presently show that these are the opinions of the mere techni-

calist. But one more extract from Spohr is worth inserting—

“It occurred to me when I first thought of my great European tour, to collect in an album compositions from all the musicians whose acquaintance I made. I began at once in Vienna, where I received from all the composers I knew little pieces written by their own hands, most of them expressly for my album.

“The most valuable contribution came from Beethoven ; it was a canon in three parts on the words from Schiller’s *Maid of Orleans* : ‘Kurz ist der Schmerz und ewig währt die Freude.’ Two things about it are noticeable, first, that Beethoven, whose writing was as a rule almost illegible, must have bestowed especial pains on this page, for it is most neatly written, which is the more remarkable as he drew the lines in free hand without a music pen ; and, secondly, that I had to supply a bar which was missing at the beginning of the third part. It concludes with the wish : ‘Wherever you find true art and true artists, may you, dear Spohr, think kindly of me.—Your friend, LOUIS VAN BEETHOVEN.’ ”

This souvenir was highly suggestive of the artist to whom fate had been so cruel. He had shortly before attained the height of his fame and honours, and realized to the full the greatness of his creative power, by a noteworthy occurrence, namely, the grand concert which took place on November 29th, 1814,

and formed a very prominent part of the brilliant festivities by which the labours of the Vienna Congress were relieved and brightened. We shall presently come to this first, true, great art festival, in which music, apart from the church and the stage, was directly appealed to, to give expression to the all-prevailing sentiments. A marvellous impression was produced on the thousands assembled in the Redouten Saal, and who, in a certain sense, represented the culture of Europe. Beethoven here beheld the grandeur of his work, and this consciousness raised him above the troubles of life, and made Schiller's words the expression of his innermost convictions,—  
"Kurz ist der schmerz ewig währt der Freude."

The next two extracts by W. Tomaschek and Dr. Weissenbach gave us an equal insight into his daily necessities and vexations, and his lofty intuition and artistic energy.





## CHAPTER XV.

### BEETHOVEN AND MEYERBEER.

**A**MONG the many thousands whom curiosity, interest in art, business, politics, or other reasons brought to Vienna was Tomaschek, from Prague. He had just heard *Fidelio* (on October 9th). Besides a certain life-like charm, his sketches of that period have a special interest for this generation, as giving the clearly expressed opinion of a great and true prophet in his art on one of those uncalled Apostles who use other than Gospel means—(letter of February 23rd, 1817, to Madame Ertmann)—Giacomo Meyerbeer. Tomaschek says—

“My brother and I visited Beethoven on the forenoon of the 10th October; the poor fellow was unusually deaf that day, so that one had to shout rather than speak to become intelligible to him. The apartment in which he received us, in a friendly manner, was gorgeously furnished, but as untidy as his hair; there was an upright piano in the room, on

the desk of which stood the text of 'Weissenbach's Cantata *Der Glorreiche Augenblick*'; the pencil with which he had been sketching out his work lay on the keyboard; on a piece of paper close by the most diverse ideas had been jotted down, regardless of the least connection, the most heterogeneous elements side by side, just as they had occurred to him. These were the materials for the new cantata."

"Equally confused was his conversation, which like most deaf people he carried on in a very loud voice, and constantly passed his hand over his ear as if in search of his enfeebled hearing. I subjoin some portions only of the conversation, in which he left out a great many verbs; but I omit certain names which I do not think it expedient to mention—

"I.—'Herr van Beethoven, pray pardon me for disturbing you. I am Tomaschek of Prague, composer to Count Burguoy, and have taken the liberty of visiting you with my brother.'

"B.—'I am very pleased to make your acquaintance; you do not in the least disturb me.'

"I.—'Dr. R. desires to be remembered to you.'

"B.—'What is he doing? I have not heard of him for a long time.'

"I.—'He wishes to know how your law suit is progressing.'

"B.—'Mere formalities do not help it on.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This was an action against Kinsky's executors for the allowance already referred to. K. was killed suddenly by a fall from his horse.

"I.—'I heard you had composed a Requiem?'

"B.—'I intended to write a Requiem as soon as this affair is over. How can I write before I gain my cause?'

"Then he began to tell me all the circumstances. He spoke disjointedly, and rather rhapsodically; at last he turned the conversation to other matters—

"I.—'You seem very industrious, Herr von Beethoven.'

"B.—'Am I not obliged to be? What would become of my fame?'

"I.—'Does my pupil Worzischek often visit you?'

"B.—'He has been here several times, but I have not heard him. Last time he brought me one of his compositions, which was very well written for so young a man.'

"(Beethoven referred to the Twelve Rhapsodies for the piano, which afterwards appeared dedicated to me.)

"I.—'You seldom go out?'

"B.—'Scarcely anywhere.'

"I.—'A new opera by \* \* \* is to be given to-day; I do not care about hearing music of that kind.'

"B.—'Good heavens! There must be such compositions, or what would the common herd do?'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* for Nov. 14, announces from Vienna :—"Herr Meyerbeer has established his fame in private circles—he never plays in public—as one of the greatest living artists, and as such is universally esteemed and valued." It is he who is spoken of above.



"I.—'I am told that there is a young foreign artist here who is an extraordinary pianist.'<sup>1</sup>

"B.—'Yes, I have also heard of him, but I have not heard him myself. Bless me; let him stay only three months with us, and we shall hear what the Viennese think of his playing. I know how everything new takes here.'

"I.—'And you have never met him?'

"B.—'I made his acquaintance at the performance of my *Battle*, when several of the composers here took an instrument. That young man played the big drum; he did not beat properly, and was always too late, so that I was not at all pleased with him, and I had to give him a regular blowing-up. Ha, ha, ha, that vexed him. There is nothing to be done with him; he has not the courage to come in at the right time.'

"My brother and I laughed heartily over this incident. Declining his invitation to dinner, we took our leave, promising to visit him again before my departure."

The account continues under date November 7, 1814—

"I visited Beethoven on the 24th, for I felt a great desire to see him once more before I left. I was announced by his servant and admitted at once. If the house was disorderly on the occasion of my

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to Hummel's satirical catch "Eselshaut."

first visit, it was still more so now. The tables and chairs in the second room were covered with pieces of the score, which Umlauf, whom Beethoven introduced to me, was apparently correcting.

“I.—‘Have you continued well?’

“B.—‘Full of vexations as always; there is no living here.’

“I.—‘I see you are very busy about your concert; do not let me hinder you.’

“B.—‘Not at all, I am glad to see you. There are so many disagreeables in connection with a concert, and corrections without end.’

“I.—‘I have just read an announcement that your concert is postponed.’

“B.—‘The copying was all wrong. I was to have a rehearsal on the day of the concert; so I have put off the latter.’

“I.—‘There is nothing more annoying, commonplace, and vulgar than the preparations for a concert.’

“B.—‘You are quite right, one can’t get on for sheer stupidity. And what a lot of money you must lay out. It is inexcusable the way art is treated now. I have to pay a third part to the Theatre Direction, and a fifth part to the Zuchthaus. Pfui, confound it! as soon as the business is over, I shall ask whether music is a free art or not. Believe me, art is nothing nowadays.’

"I.—'Were you at ——'s opera?'"<sup>1</sup>

"B.—'No, it went off very badly, I thought of you; you were right in not anticipating much from his compositions. After the performance I was talking to the opera singers at the tavern they usually go to. I said straight out to them, "You have been distinguishing yourselves again! What a goosey trick you have played! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves for your want of knowledge and discernment in making such a stir about this opera! Was such a verdict to be expected from experienced singers! I would give you my opinion on it, only you would not understand me!"'

"I.—'I was at the opera; it began with a Hallelujah, and finished with a Requiem.'

"B.—'Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! It is just the same with his playing. I have often been asked whether I had heard him, and said no; but I gather from the criticism of my friends, who know how to judge, that he is a skilful but a superficial man.'

"I.—'I heard that he played at Herr ——'s before his departure for Paris, and was not so well liked.'

"B.—'Ha, ha! what did I say to you? I knew it would be so. Let him only stay here six months, and then let us hear what is said of his playing. It is nothing at all. The greatest pianists have always

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<sup>1</sup> Here again Meyerbeer is referred to, whose opera (*The Two Caliphs*), performed on October 20, was a total failure, in spite of an excellent representation, brilliant scenery, and the hearty applause from the Prussians present after the overture.

been also the greatest composers, but how did they play. Not like the present-day pianists, who only run up and down the keyboard with passages learnt off by heart. Tusch! what do you call that? Nothing. The playing of the real *virtuoso* was something connected and complete, that could be written down like a well-developed piece. That was pianoforte playing, the other is not.'

"I.—'It seems to me ridiculous that ———, who has very little command over the instrument, should announce himself as the greatest of pianists.'

"B.—'He has no idea of instrumental music. He is a miserable creature, and I will tell him so to his face. He once praised beyond measure an instrumental composition full of blunders; I could only laugh at his ignorance. He understands vocal music, and should keep to that, for of any other he knows scarcely anything.'

"I.—'This gives me a very low estimate of ———'s acquirements.'

"B.—'As I said, he understands nothing but singing.'

"I.—'I hear that ——— is making a stir.'<sup>1</sup>

"B.—'Good heavens! he plays prettily, but otherwise he is a ———. There is nothing in him. I used

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<sup>1</sup> This was probably young Moscheles, whom Tomaschek had just heard on November 15th, for he writes:—"Then Moscheles began to improvise, at least so the programme said, but I could not perceive the least sign of phantasy in his fine brilliant playing; a short and meaningless adagio by way of introduction, followed by a motive from *Fidelio*, with a couple of bravura

to be outspoken in my criticisms, which made me many enemies ; now I judge nobody that I may offend nobody, reflecting that anything good will keep its ground in spite of ill will and envy ; if there is nothing solid about it, it will fall through, prop it up as one may.'

"I.—'That is my theory too.'

"Beethoven had meanwhile been dressing to go out."

At last Tomaschek went to the rehearsal for the great Congress Concert. For days before he had heard and seen nothing. He says—

"The 28th was therefore the more interesting, when I went to the great Redoutsaal, at 11 a.m., for the rehearsal of Beethoven's concert. I met Spohr and Councillor von Sonnleithner (composer of the text of *Fidelio*), and sat near them all the time. The liveliness and ready wit of the latter offered a striking contrast to Spohr's quietness and equanimity. The symphony in A major was played, which, however, did not please me throughout ; then the new Cantata, in which at any rate Beethoven does not belie his genius, but the declamation, the organ accompaniment ! Such an undertaking, as has been said, surpasses the limits of his genius. Mademoiselle Milder's magnificent voice penetrated to every part of the hall, but Herr Mayseder's pure and neat violin

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variations, the whole finger performance concluding with the finale from *Fidelio*, can scarcely be regarded as a phantasy created by the momentary inspiration of the artist. The virtuoso was greatly applauded, especially by the ladies.

playing sounded thin. Beethoven made a great mistake in having a violin solo in a hall of such gigantic proportions. The Cantata was not, and could not, be a success, for its defects are of a kind which neither genius nor fame can cover. There followed, as the conclusion of the programme, the *Battle of Vittoria*, over which most of the audience went crazy; but I, on the other hand, was pained to find a Beethoven, to whom Providence has perhaps assigned the highest throne in the musical kingdom, among the greatest of materialists. I am told, indeed, that Beethoven regards the work as an absurdity, and likes it only because it took the Viennese by storm. I think, on the contrary, that he has acquired popularity in Vienna, not by his *Battle*, but his other glorious compositions. When the orchestra had almost foundered in a total confusion of booming, rattling, and crashing, I expressed my displeasure at the uproarious applause to Herr von Sonnleithner; he observed, in a scornful tone, that the majority preferred to have the tympanums of their ears thus assaulted. The concert was conducted by Umlauf. Beethoven stood by his side and beat time, which, owing to his deafness, he did for the most part incorrectly; but as the band only followed Umlauf's lead, no confusion was produced. Quite stupefied by the noise, I was glad to escape into the open air."

This extract brings us back to Beethoven's immediate circle, in which we meet an entirely new element.



## CHAPTER XVI.

DR. ALOYS WEISSENBACH.



WE have referred more than once to the cantata, "Der Glorreiche Augenblick." It was written to celebrate the assemblage of the great potentates in Vienna for the establishment of peace. The text had been prepared by Dr. Aloys Weissenbach, of Salzburg, and its defective versification cost Beethoven an "heroic determination" to set it to music.

We see how Weissenbach regarded Beethoven from a letter dated November 15th, 1819, and now in private keeping. In exaggerated, but sincerely reverential terms, he invites his "heart's friend" to Salzburg. "Thousands of times have I thought of you, misjudged and oppressed by the great world," he writes; and we learn the cause and commencement of his attachment, from a *brochure*, "My Journey to Congress—Truth and Poetry," published by him in 1816, and long since out of print.



He had been drawn to Vienna by the "mere desire of seeing the crowned heads there assembled." Like a true Tyrolese, loyalty was one of his chief characteristics; and he was keenly sensible to all that is lofty and beautiful in the world. Born in the Oberinn Valley in 1766, he had commenced his studies in a cloister, received his medical education in Vienna, and followed his profession in the Turkish War and in the First Revolution. Since 1804 he had practised as a physician in Salzburg. Here he found leisure to indulge his taste for art, and to pursue his literary labours. The above-mentioned paper shows us his general standpoint.

It refers first to the earlier and brighter times of the Emperor Joseph II. "In the noble religious houses of Austria, where the money-grubbing spirit never entered, where the world and the cloister have not stood mutually aloof, but grown up together in organic unity, so that we gladly do homage to the purity which pervades them—science, literature, and art greet us from altar, wall, and roof of the church, from the libraries of the brethren, and in their mind and speech. That modesty of manners, language, and bearing, which, if not cried down, is pointed at in the so-called polite world as awkwardness, or at least prudish affectation, has taken refuge within these sacred walls. And where could the contemplative life, which science demands for its highest efforts, find a more congenial home? Where could the young

mind, with all its human frailty, find better seclusion from earthly influences than in this sphere, which does not, like ours, revolve round the gratification of the senses as its sun? And this is the message I would proclaim to all mankind, even to the lofty assemblage met together to restore peace to a distracted world, that men must return to their former holy faith if they would be happy here and hereafter. We are more wretched than our fathers, because we have less faith; we are more wicked, because we have lost the sense of the holy and the eternal."

If this sounds very Romanish, the feeling which underlies it is genuine and true, and at that time only too understandable. True religion was equally dead in both churches. And what did Beethoven write in his diary after his Congress performance, which had first showed him the spirit of his art, and the deep needs of his time and of all mankind? He exclaimed—

"Let everything that hath life be devoted to the highest, and become a sanctuary of art. Let me live, if only by artificial means, could such be found. Let the mechanisms for hearing be made perfect,—and then travel. This thou owest to thyself, to mankind, and to thy Creator; only thus canst thou develop all that is within thee. A small Court, a little Chapel, where my compositions shall be performed to the praise of the Almighty, the Everlasting, the Eternal. So let my last days be passed, and to future races ———."

How sacredly he kept this vow is shown by what he accomplished in the "last days"—those sublime works of art of which it was justly said, at the celebration of his centenary, that "from their spirit our civilization received fresh life; and that thus regenerated and inspired, it would become transfused with a new religion."

Any one with kindred feelings will understand from such expressions as Dr. Weissenbach's, as Goethe did from Bettina's "hasty effusion," what he meant to say, and what was really the case. He had, moreover, deep feelings of patriotism and nationality, and Napoleon was in his eyes the "tyrant," "despot," "destroyer." We can therefore understand our master's partiality for such a friend; he overlooked the extravagance of his sentiments because they were radically sound and true.

But let us hear what he says in his tenth chapter, entitled "Fidelio, by Ludwig van Beethoven." "I went to the Hof Theatre to-day, and thought myself in heaven. *The opera was Beethoven's 'Fidelio.'*" He then sketches a conversation he had on art in the theatre. "I am always," he says, "on my guard against submitting grand and glorious impressions to the intellect before admitting them into my soul. . . . Æsthetic criticism nearly always treats a work of art like a child who tears off the leaves of a flower." And a sentence like the following shows how far he had carried this sentiment

into art, and how true and liberal were his religious feelings : "Is there a surer proof of our Divine descent than the impulse and the capacity to enjoy and produce the beautiful."

How near does such a man, who regarded art and religion as identical, stand to Beethoven, with whom he was also in harmony in his opinions on art itself, and in his strong feeling of reverence for the Greek world, of which, in reference to the resurrection of music in the inner life of his own Austro-German people, he says, "The spirit of the Greek people was the cradle and nurse of Greek poetry." If he is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, it was Beethoven who fulfilled the prophecy. Much reads as if written for us who have seen a tragic art arise on the basis of music. He says—

"Homer's songs in the mouths of the rhapsodists were certain to open the doors of every house in the country, and the hearts in every home; the poet at the Olympian games led the whole nation to the adoration of his muse; but these were favours bestowed only on the public expression of the beautiful and the great.

"The ancients found in a work of art and in the theatre greater things than we do, and regarded them with quite different feelings. They beheld the gods, listened to their speech, and traced in the events of the drama the dreadful hand of fate. In the chorus only did they see their own likeness—

the human mind fearing, lamenting, rejoicing, bathed in seas of bliss and sorrow, struck by the arrows of terror and delight. I should not care to hear the miserable answer to the question—What do we see and hear? They approached such representations with a reverence we seldom carry into our churches, with a believing heart full of the tenderest sensibility for the beautiful and noble, with a dread of the mysterious fate moving in the drama. They entered the theatre with a deep obeisance to the God-like genius of the poetic and imitative artist. I dare not ask again, how do we approach it? We demand some enjoyment for our money; and if this is not forthcoming, we must at least have the pleasure of yawning, gossiping, chattering, whispering, or doing just as if we were at home.

“A work of art produces, therefore, no electrical effects upon us, penetrating our inmost soul; but only an electrical tickling, which perhaps draws a few drops from our eyes, or sends a thrill through our nerves. Instead of the gods and heroes, we behold our friends and neighbours, examine them critically to see whether they move and speak after our fashion, and in accordance with good taste, custom, and the laws of society. Instead of the dreadful hand of Fate, which the Greeks traced in the drama and on the stage, we watch foolish devices for carrying on secret correspondence. Instead of the struggle between free-will and necessity, we see virtue and

vice as close companions. Instead of the chorus, we have a commonplace crowd of servants. The great art of the modern dramatic poet consists in making that element of chance which cannot be dispensed with appear as natural as possible, by assigning to it motives, meaning by chance something about as important as dancing a French minuet. *The divine element in art can only be felt through the soul*; a so-called acquired taste is merely a cynical one which, with superficial touch, desecrates a work of art."

We shall presently see what was Beethoven's opinion of the art, not only of his own, but of our days also; and we seem still to hear his voice in the words with which his true disciple, Richard Wagner, prefaced the collective edition of his own writings and poems, that "true music is the life of art, and the only influential art of the present and the future." Wagner's decisive words as to the importance of Beethoven's music we have already quoted. Weissenbach continues—

"Music has alone preserved itself from the desecrating spirit of the times. We have remarked that it still lives in the hearts of the people; and this happy circumstance is no inexplicable mystery. It appeals to the most deep-seated of the senses, and unites in one common bond all who can hear. In no other art work has intellect a smaller share. When the form has long disappeared the sense of the enjoy-

ment still remains, the magical tones continue to ring in our ears, and it is long before they die. The musical is the most universal of all art forms ; unrestricted by strangeness of language or form, it belongs from its birth not to one people or race, but to all mankind. As a sharer in the same organ, it has a common cradle with speech ; it is, indeed, probable that men sang before they spoke, so that the differences of language and race have only tended to the diffusion of music.

“She is the first-born of the nine daughters of Zeus, and *she will live the longest*, because she is least shackled by speciality, and therefore most fully participates in the freedom and grandeur of universality ; because she entrusts the representation of her works to a primary organ possessed by all mankind ; because she is least dependent on material means ; because the kingdom in which she moves and reigns is the boundless domain of the human heart ; because intellect has no share in her creations ; because, in comparison with the other arts, she has a freer command over her elements, and extracts greater variety from their infinity ; for these and a dozen unnamed reasons she continues to live freely in the souls of the people. . . .”

“Here, too, is to be discovered the reason why, whenever genius manifests itself in a master, it is never recognized on its first appearance, but is often utterly misunderstood ; the rays of its glory must, as



it were by force penetrate the people. . . . The ultimate triumph of genius, as of every moral law and blessing and all that is divine on earth, is assured from the beginning: *Don Giovanni* and *Fidelio* are two Orions whose light has travelled a long way to reach our planet, but which will never be extinguished."

And he concludes with the following beautiful description of the feelings awakened by a hearing of *Fidelio*—

"We were thus talking on various matters till the overture began. There can be no more talking when Beethoven sings. I will not dissect my feelings about the Opera. *All the tragic emotions which the old master, Æschylus, had hitherto alone aroused, swept like a rushing flood over my soul.* We receive the same supreme enjoyment from the element of pain in Beethoven's *Fidelio*, as from the element of pleasure in the rare intellectual displays in Goethe's *Elective Affinities*. I saw that the whole audience was moved. Such is the power of music in the prisoners' chorus that the heart ceases to beat, the pulse stands still, till the rescuers arrive and press forward to fetch the neglected hero. How thrilling is the introduction to Florestan's "Song of Mourning," in the third act. I confess that never in my life was I so affected by a musical work. A lady assured me that she could not bear a second hearing, having been, as she expressed it, so carried away by the music.

It is part of the omnipotence of such a genius to have infused into these materials a life so lofty, so sublime, and so closely sympathetic with all that is human."

Weissenbach had, indeed, an intuitive and much more clear perception than many far greater minds both of the creative power and the tragic nature of music; and this explains his exaggerated manner of speaking of his individual intercourse with a true prophet of his art. If the description seems in parts bombastical, it is true as regards the essential points. He gives what he calls "characteristic traits of Beethoven," which often display such deep insight that we readily put up with its stilted style. He says—

"With my soul filled with the grandeur of the creative genius in this music, I went home from the theatre firmly determined not to leave Vienna without becoming acquainted with so eminent a man. Strangely enough, I found Beethoven's card on my table, with a friendly invitation to take coffee with him the next morning." Then he mentions his "idolatry" of genius in early youth, and how he walked from Prague only to see Goethe and Schiller, "truly with a heart fuller than my purse"; and confesses that even in the autumn of life he is not altogether free from such feelings. He continues—

"And I drank coffee with him, and felt his kiss and the pressure of his hand! Yes, I am proud to be able to say publicly, Beethoven honoured me with his

heart's confidence. Whether these pages will ever come into his hands, I know not ; but this I know, that if they do, with that independence of true genius whose cradle and throne rest not on this earth, he will cease to read when he finds his name mentioned either in praise or blame. But his name is no longer his own : it belongs to the century, and future ages will demand from ours the portraits of its great sons. I have, I believe, comprehended the nature of my saint, and grasped his characteristic traits.<sup>1</sup>

"Beethoven has greater bodily vigour and robustness than usually fall to the lot of men of high intellect. The whole man is visible in his countenance. If M. Gall, the phrenologist, is right in the position he has assigned to the faculties, musical genius may be grasped with the hand on Beethoven's head. His strength extends, however, only to flesh and bones, his nervous system being in the highest degree weakly. How often has it grieved me to see the spiritual strings of this harmonious organism so easily snapped and put out of tune. He once had a dreadful attack of typhus fever, and from that time may be dated the decay of his nervous system, and, in all probability, his painful loss of hearing.<sup>2</sup> I have

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<sup>1</sup> Weissenbach's name occurs in the *Conversations* of 1819, a proof that he lived in Beethoven's recollection.

<sup>2</sup> Beethoven had, as we have seen, several severe illnesses. But as this is described as typhus, it must be the illness of the summer of 1796 which is referred to, and from which may be traced the first indications of deafness.

often had long talks with him about this deprivation, which is a far greater misfortune to him than to most people. We might parody what Lessing said of the painter, Conti von Raphael, 'If he had been born without arms, he would have been the greatest painter in the world.' Music would emanate from Beethoven without entering from without. . . . The forms which he ceaselessly produces he does not receive from his organs of hearing, but from God. It is, however, a significant fact that before his illness his delicacy and quickness of hearing were unsurpassed, and that even now any discord is painful to him, probably because he is all harmony. The loss of this noble sense is the more grievous, as Nature had only connected him with the world by few and tender threads. He is now completely isolated, and forced to allow the dog of hypochondriaism to snarl at the ever cheerful genius of art.

"His character quite corresponds with the splendour of his talent. I never saw a more child-like mind in union with so much power and pride. He has an innate impulse towards all that is good and beautiful, which is far superior to all training.<sup>1</sup> The manifestations of such a spirit have often delighted me. Deseccration, in thought, word or deed, of what he loves and honours angers him, and moves him to threats and even tears. He is, therefore, constantly at variance

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<sup>1</sup> We here recognize in our author that totality of intellectual conception which is, indeed, "far superior to all training."

with the world, which is, as the poet says, 'ever at war with the beautiful and good.' . . .

"He has such an intense love of moral goodness that he will abandon his friendship with any one in whom he discovers the least speck of evil. I can testify from personal experience that nothing the world can offer—dignity, riches, or rank—has power to bribe him. This extreme sensibility, and the mighty force of his artistic genius, cause alike his happiness and unhappiness. He is an example of that conflict between gifted natures and the world, so vividly depicted by Goethe in his 'Tasso.' . . . I need scarcely observe that money has no value for him beyond its necessity. He never knows what he needs, or what he spends. He would be rich, if he had a loving careful hand to manage his affairs. While his disposition inclines him to hold aloof from the world, the innocence of his nature often exposes him to foul play. Bitter experience might have instructed him, but he has such an aversion to worldly matters, and is so unpractical and careless, that he smiles as artlessly as a child while he is being mischievously duped.

"But this nature is as deep as it is child-like. Anyone who has heard his music or looked at his scores will acknowledge that his harmonies are not superficial. I ask again, could such power and boldness have other than the deepest foundations? I think that a musical genius is in general the most profound.

His views on the nature, forms, and laws of music, their relations to poetry and to the human heart, are no less original than his compositions. They are in the truest sense inborn ideas, not studied aphorisms. I know that Goethe, whose acquaintance he made at Carlsbad (Teplitz), also thought highly of him in this respect.<sup>1</sup>

“His morality is that of a better age; it shows childhood and innocence hand in hand, and displays a profound aversion towards all that is base in the world. His chastity is so spotless that he might sing Bürger’s song of man’s power upon the housetops.<sup>2</sup> His manners have been decried as coarse, probably because he did not receive his genius from a dancing-master, nor display it in the ante-rooms of princes . . . because—he will be what he is. . . . Yet posterity will learn that the age recognized the master, and that its best men honoured him. I need only mention one of his pupils, the Archduke Rudolph of Austria, whose name Beethoven always pronounces with child-like reverence. Of the great

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<sup>1</sup> Weissenbach was the better able to judge on such matters, as Beethoven must have discussed with him the text of their joint work, and his observations are more intuitive, that is, more intelligent than any so-called objective ones. Of importance to us, also, is the additional proof of the appreciation of Beethoven by a really great poet like Goethe.

<sup>2</sup> That Weissenbach’s enthusiasm carries him a little beyond the mark will be seen from Beethoven’s life. Yet this will also show how radically he was right.

people in whose circles he had moved in earlier years, one friend remained to him in his retirement, Count Lichnowsky, a noble in the noblest sense. They had a deep affection for each other, which was strengthened by their both being ardent lovers of art.<sup>1</sup>

“His manner of life, as regards the division of the hours of the day, the discharge of business, and the supply of daily wants, is somewhat irregular. One who is in the service of a god is naturally free from the laws of time and the world. He seems scarcely to take any note of time beyond what the sun and stars tell him. . . . His irregularity is greatest when he is composing. He will then often be absent from the house for several days, without any one knowing where he is. He longs to escape the great world, and leaves the city for the open country. . . . On such an occasion I wrote the following song on his door—

“Wo ist er, sagt mir hingegangen,  
Der Meister hoher tön' und Lieder?  
Die Thür ist zu drei tage schon,  
Ich höre nicht der Saiten ton,  
Der sonst die Kommenden empfangen;  
Er ist nicht da! er ist davon!  
Die stiege rufich auf und nieder:  
Wo ist der Meister hin der Lieder?”

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<sup>1</sup> Here again is an exaggeration, but it is the exaggeration of a truth. Count Moritz was brother of Prince\* Charles Lichnowsky.



Schon dreimal komm'ich anzufragen :  
Wo ist er hin ? Wann kommt er wieder ?  
Ach ist er zu den Sternen hin,  
Ins reich der ew'gen Harmonien ?  
Der Diener weiss nur das zu sagen :  
O seiet nicht besorgt um ihn,  
Er gehet fort, und kehret wieder  
Und bringet süsse Tön und Lieder.

Wo ist das schöne Land gelegen,  
Wo er die Töne holt und Lieder ? ”

So much for the poetry, which at any rate shows that a perception of the beautiful does not include the faculty of expressing it ; and we readily believe in Beethoven's "heroic determination," as regards the Cantata. Weissenbach concludes by remarking that "Beethoven wore no orders—he never received any ; but if the Muse should ask for one who, like Goethe, surpassed all his contemporaries, the Fatherland would point to Ludwig van Beethoven."





## CHAPTER XVII.

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### *A VISIT IN THE YEAR 1816.*



UTTERLY opposed to the extravagant but sincere enthusiasm of the warm-hearted Tyrolese is the sober artistic admiration of a northern luminary, whose account happens to come next.

Amenda, that true friend of Kourland, recommended his young compatriot, Dr. Karl von Bursy, who was on his travels, to visit Beethoven. Bursy was born in 1791, and therefore then twenty-four years of age. He was a doctor, and, like Weissenbach, a dilettante in poetry and music. At his death, he was medical inspector at the Salzburg Johannis Hospital, where Weissenbach had been head surgeon. Karl Amenda was a pastor at Talsen ; he was Beethoven's most intimate friend, and to him was addressed one of the saddest of his letters, that of June 1st, 1801, in which Beethoven laments the first fatal signs of his life's calamity. Now that the accounts of the Vienna Congress had attracted

the attention of Beethoven's most distant friends, Amenda, "after a long culpable silence," renewed his intercourse, and sent him the text of the opera, *Bacchus*, written by his friend Berg.

Beethoven, therefore, received the young man kindly from the beginning. But he, notwithstanding his reverence and enthusiasm, rather underrated Beethoven's greatness. For all that, these recollections must not be omitted, for they give us a glimpse of the heartfelt joy with which Beethoven and everyone else hailed the lasting re-establishment of peace. The "Holy Alliance" brought about the restoration of the old *régime*; and Vienna suffered much socially and materially, when the excitement of the Congress was over, for its extraordinary prodigality. In this narration we behold only the violent wrathful outbursts of the master who was so "hotly aglow" for moral justice and all that is good and beautiful; of his lofty ideas and ideal we have no trace, not even in the dim outlines of a conversation, which, however, serves to throw a significant light on the prosaic narrator. And yet it was during this year 1816 that Beethoven said, "quite different matters occupy my mind"; and when stirred by the excitement of events, but incomparably more by the force of an inward impulse, he gave decisive shape to that great tragic work—the true poem of his life, and of the life of all mankind—the Ninth Symphony. But an echo, at least reaches us of the mighty blows which therein

resound against fate and the misery of the world : "He is full of wormwood and gall, dissatisfied and defiant, pouring out cursings against Austria and especially Vienna," says our author. But let us quote him more fully, and take a chapter from his methodically written journal—

"Vienna, June 1st.

"Must I not note and commemorate the day on which I made the acquaintance of Beethoven? I went to see him yesterday, but could not find him, as Herr Riedl (music publisher) had given me a wrong address. He lives at No. 1056 in the Seilerstadt, and not as Madame Nanette Streicher wrote to me, No. 1055. I always had the idea that Beethoven must live in a princely palace, and under the protection of a Mæcenas of his noble art. How great, then, was my astonishment when a herring-seller directed me to the next-door house, saying, 'I think Herr van Beethoven lives there, for I have often seen him go in.' I inquired on the ground-floor, and learned that Beethoven lived on the third story, up three flights of stairs. What a contrast to my expectations! A wretched house, and the third floor! A narrow stone staircase led to the room where a Beethoven creates and works. I confess I felt overpowered, as if going into the presence of the sublime. It was, indeed, no everyday sight I was to see, no everyday man with whom I *hoped* to speak; for I could not be sure that I actually should. A small door at which I rang led

me into a little vestibule, opening into the kitchen and children's room. I was received by a servant who, with his family, seems to belong to Beethoven's household. He wanted to admit me at once, but I gave him my letter from Amenda, and waited anxiously for an answer. The servant at last returned, saying, 'Have the kindness to walk in'; and I stepped behind a thick woollen curtain into the study. Beethoven entered from an adjoining room. It seemed hard and unnatural only to pay a ceremonious compliment to the master of my art. I should like to have seized his hand and imprinted on it a kiss of the deepest reverence.

"If Jean Paul was altogether unlike my previous conception, Beethoven fairly corresponded to what I had imagined. He is short, but sturdy looking, with grey hair, which he wears thrown back, rather a red face, and fiery eyes small, but deeply set, and full of intense life. He is very much like Amenda, especially when he laughs. Beethoven inquired after him first thing, and spoke of him with much friendliness. 'He is a very good fellow,' he said. 'I unfortunately live at a distance from my friends, and am left alone in odious Vienna.' He asked me to speak loudly, as his hearing was very bad just then. He wished in the summer to go into the country and to Baden, for the sake of his health. He has not been well for some time, and has composed nothing new. I asked him about Berg's opera text, and he said it was very

good, and with a few alterations would do very well for composition. Hitherto, his illness had prevented him from undertaking such a work, and he wished to write to Amenda himself about it. I shouted into his ear, that for such a work one must have plenty of time and leisure. 'No,' he said, 'I do not go on continuously. I always work at several things at once, and take up first one then the other.' He often misunderstood me, and had to pay the greatest attention to catch what I said. This of course much disconcerted me, and sharing my embarrassment he spoke the more himself and very loudly.

"He told me much about Vienna and his life there. He is full of wormwood and gall, dissatisfied and defiant, pouring out cursings against Austria and especially Vienna. He speaks quickly and with great vivacity. He often strikes the piano with his fist so violently that the room resounds again. He is not reserved, for he soon adverted to his personal affairs, and told me a great deal about himself and his circumstances. This is exactly the *signum diagnosticum* of hypochondraism. To me this hypochondraism was very welcome, for I thus heard from his own lips a great deal about his life. He complains of the times, and for many reasons. Art, being no longer so far above the multitude, is not so much esteemed, nor nearly so well paid. Is it creditable that a Beethoven can have cause for a pecuniary complaint? O ye rich! How poor must

you be, if you have nothing to spare for Beethoven! He would have abundance, and you would want nothing. Give him a portion of the treasure you squander, and your life will be rich in good deeds. Generations to come will thank you for every care and grief from which you have released Beethoven; for he must be free from earthly anxiety, if he is to give the world its due. His power is so stupendous that he would unceasingly be laying up a rich store for present and future art-honouring people. 'Why do you stay in Vienna, when any other court would gladly offer you an appointment?' 'Circumstances keep me here, but it is very miserable and wretched,' said he, 'things could not be worse. One can trust nobody. No one fulfils anything that is not down in black and white. You have to work for a miserly payment, and then do not get what was promised.' Beethoven composed an occasional cantata for the congress, but it was never performed. After many cabals he gave a concert at the Redouten Saal. The Emperor of Russia paid 200 ducats for his ticket. Beethoven was particularly pleased that the General Intendant of the Imperial Stage, Count Palfy, received a severe reprimand. He is not at all partial to him.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The matters referred to are those about which Beethoven had complained, as we have seen, to Tomaschek. Concerning Palfy, *vide* Spohr's narration. But what is said about the remuneration is not quite correct, for these gifts formed the foundation of the little capital laid up for his nephew, and found after his death. We shall hear of it later on.



“ Beethoven seems very anxious about money ; and I must confess this makes him more human, and brings him closer to us. It shows that he is only a dweller in the dust, and gives him a kinship with us, for as an artist he does not belong to earth. I felt nearer to him when he thus talked about the chief need of life. Sad enough, but true. I freely admit that the less ideal side of the ideal artist drew me nearer to him. So commonplace is the ordinary man ! I did not speak much about music to one so immeasurably my superior. From vanity ? No ! That the consummate artist might not look into my lowly sphere, that his eye might be spared the mean prospect—such was the cause of my silence.

“ He was pleased to hear that *Fidelio* had been so frequently well received in Berlin. He lamented the loss of Milder Hauptmann. ‘ Her place is vacant,’ he said, ‘ none of the singers here can sing as she did. We could not pay her, so she did well to go to Berlin. Music is very much on the decline in Vienna ; and is quite neglected, and the public put up with anything.

“ His brother having died recently, Beethoven has undertaken the education of the orphan son. He talked much about it, and took this opportunity of finding fault with the schools here, to which he had sent the little fellow, but soon removed him. ‘ The boy must be an artist or a *savant*, that he may lead a noble life.’ He expressed some grand views on life.

When he is silent his brow contracts, and his gloomy appearance might inspire fear, did we not know that such a lofty artistic soul must have noble springs. Confidence growing up between us, he allowed me to visit him frequently, for he only went backwards and forwards to Baden; I was to go to him whenever he could be helpful to me. He wrote down my address, and parted from me with the friendly words, 'I shall fetch you some day.'

"Thus I saw him whom I have so long esteemed, loved, and honoured. If Beethoven were not so deaf, I should certainly gain his affection and confidence. In spite of his apparent hardness and coldness, he is rendered warm and gentle by the devotion of a spirit not seeking support from his mind. His house, which looks on to the Green Bastion, is cheerful, and kept tolerably clean and tidy. On one side of the vestibule is his sleeping apartment, on the other his music room, in which stands a locked piano. I saw but little music; some pieces of music paper lay on the writing table. Two good oil portraits of a man and a woman hung on the wall.<sup>1</sup>

"Beethoven was not, like Jean Paul, dressed in rags, but quite in gala costume, confirming what I had already heard about his being vain, which of course

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<sup>1</sup> One of the portraits must have been his grandfather's, the other of the Countess Theresa of Brunswick. Both are now in the possession of the nephew's widow, Madame Carl van Beethoven, in Vienna.

renders his deafness still more annoying to him, and accounts for his excuses that he generally heard better than just then. I find, after inquiry, no grounds for the assertion that he is sometimes mad. Herr Riedl assured me that he was not so at all, and only had what is called artist's spleen. On that point everyone thinks differently. Riedl, for example, as a dealer in works of art and publisher of several of Beethoven's works, probably considers the high price which he puts upon his manuscripts as evidence of such spleen; for, indeed, he said to me that Beethoven charged monstrously for his compositions. My ideas of artistic spleen are something like these commercial ones. To a consummate artist like Beethoven, having a high estimate of himself, esteeming people only for what they are, not for their title or appearance, proud towards the proud, and haughty towards the haughty, so infinitely below him—to such a man would I grant that artistic spleen, which indeed raises him in my estimation. If Beethoven did not feel his worth he would not be Beethoven, nor the great artist whom I had hitherto revered.<sup>1</sup>

“On the 25th July, I have recorded a visit to Beethoven, at one o'clock. Availing myself of his promise, I went to him with my copy of *Fidelio*, that it might be consecrated by his handwriting as a sacred

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<sup>1</sup> The foolish talk of a temporary mental derangement we shall meet with again in another extract. One so far above the ordinary standard is naturally exposed to such charges.

memorial of the master-singer. He was not at home. The servant showed me into his room, and I wrote my request on a little sheet of paper. I felt quite strange dipping his pen into his ink. The air around seemed like a breath from Parnassus, and the quill as if it had been plucked from the golden wings of Pegasus. While the servant was gone for a minute into the next room, I was seized by a demoniacal desire. For a moment my better sense prevailed, and I withstood the temptation. But the evil spirit triumphed. I was left a little longer alone, and the temptation acquired irresistible force. My weak will was powerless against it, and the deed was done. Like Faust, who could not conceal his compact with the evil one, but was branded by a scar on the left hand, so a black spot on my light coat exactly over the heart testified to the triumph of the demon. Beethoven's much worn pen, corresponding in its form to his characteristic writing, was the enticing fruit with which the serpent allured me. I quickly seized it, and the sin was committed, the theft accomplished. The *corpus delicti* now lies in my desk, and is a constant memorial of a moment of weakness.

"I went to Beethoven on July 27th, at seven o'clock in the morning; I found him at home, and had a good half-hour's pleasant chat. He said a great deal against Vienna, and spoke with much rancour. He wished himself out of the city, but felt obliged to

remain on account of his nephew, a boy of ten, whom he would gladly train as a musician, if there be any chance of his becoming eminent. He already plays the piano exceedingly well. Beethoven has now taken him into his house, and means to get him a teacher. He was very kind, and the pressure of his hand at parting made me feel of more value in my own eyes, and raised me from the commonplace sphere of everyday life.<sup>1</sup>

"I found Beethoven at his writing table, with a sheet of music before him, and a glass machine in which he was making his coffee. Neither of his two pianos were yet open. I asked him about Berg's opera text. 'It does not answer to be an opera composer here, for the managers of the theatres do not pay us.' He inveighs against the music publishers for making such confusion in his works by their new editions. They give the numbers according to their fancy. Thus, Mollo has recently republished the Trio Variations in E flat major as Op. 82; but this number properly belongs to four songs, and a much earlier one to the variations. It is, indeed, low roguery. Everything relating to bookselling is marked by the

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<sup>1</sup> Beethoven had written in Bursy's copy of *Fidelio*—

"Komm Hoffnung, lass den letzten Stern des Müden nicht erbleichen,  
O Komm, erhell sein Ziel, sei 's noch so fern.

Ludwig van Beethoven, July 29th (27th) 1816."

This passage from Leonora's grand air was a beautiful symbol of his own character at that time, and a prayer for himself, rather than for the young man.

greatest meanness. There is no sincerity shown in this kind of business.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The fourteen variations, Op. 44, which appeared in 1804, had been republished as Op. 82 by the recently established firm of Steiner, in the Paternoster Strasse am Graben (now pulled down), and it was the publishers in this street he declaimed against with such perfect justice; for Mollo had “played him such tricks” before, which he would most likely have related, so that the confusion in Bursy’s statement is very understandable.





## CHAPTER XVIII.

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### THE PAINTER KLOBER.



THE following notice was written in the year 1864, and first appeared in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*. Professor A. Klöber painted the beautiful drop scene at the Berlin opera house. His portrait of Beethoven, taken in the glorious neighbourhood of Brühl, at Mödling, represents him—in the words of the Vienna *Zeitschrift*—"with his eyes cast up in holy earnestness to those regions whence he drew the divine strains which enchanted his astonished hearers"; the wind is playing with his loose, uncovered locks, and under a tree at the side lies a boy with his hat on the ground—Beethoven's nephew. The head which Klöber lithographed, in 1842, from his original drawing, is by far the most popular portrait of Beethoven. There is an engraving of it in my little jubilee gift, "Beethoven's Breviary." We have a fresh view of the artist, who was so thoroughly



absorbed in his work, in Professor Klöber's description of the meeting in the summer of 1818, when Beethoven had just conceived the idea of writing a solemn mass, the "Missa Solennis," for the installation of his pupil and friend, the Archduke Rudolph, as Archbishop of Olmütz. This was a work thoroughly in harmony with his own deep religious feelings.

"After the campaigns of 1813 and 1814, I left the army, and resumed my artistic studies in Vienna, where the rich galleries of the princes afforded opportunities for the study of painting not to be found in Berlin, which was at that time very poor in art treasures.

"My brother-in-law, Baron von Skebensky (a landowner in Austrian Silesia), who died some years ago, asked me to paint him a portrait of Beethoven for a gallery of famous Viennese artists.

"To make Beethoven's acquaintance, and especially to persuade him to give me a sitting, was a difficult task. A lucky accidental acquaintance with one of his friends, the violoncellist, Dont, of the Imperial Opera Theatre, was of great service to me in the matter, particularly as he was interested in the sitting. Dont advised me to wait till the summer, when Beethoven generally took up his residence at Mödling, and would be most good-tempered and approachable. Beethoven was informed by a letter from a friend of my arrival, and of my wish to paint his portrait. He

had consented, but only on condition that he should not have to sit too long.

"I presented myself early in the morning. His old housekeeper informed me that he would soon come. At present he was at breakfast, but here were volumes of Goethe and Herder with which I could amuse myself while I waited. At length Beethoven appeared, and said, 'You wish to paint me, but I am very impatient.' He was very deaf, and if I wished to say anything, I had either to write it down or speak into his trumpet, unless his Famulus, a young relative of about twelve years of age, were present, who shouted the words into his ear.

"Beethoven sat down, and told the boy to practice on the piano. The instrument was a present from England, and had a leaden sounding-board. It stood four or five paces behind him, yet in spite of his deafness, Beethoven corrected every fault, and made the boy repeat certain passages.

"Beethoven had a very earnest look ; his very vivacious eyes were for the most part turned upwards, with a thoughtful and rather a gloomy expression, which I have tried to represent. His lips were closed, but the mouth was not an unkindly one. He was ready enough to expatiate on the arrogant vanity and depraved taste of the Viennese aristocracy, by whom he feels himself neglected, or at least underrated.

"In about three quarters of an hour he began to be restless, so following Dont's advice, I left off, and

asked him if I might come again the next day, as I was staying at Mödling. Beethoven was quite willing, and said, 'Then we can meet frequently, for I cannot bear to sit for long together; and you ought to thoroughly explore Mödling. The country around is very beautiful; and being an artist, you must be a lover of nature.' I often met Beethoven during my walks in Mödling, and it was most interesting to watch him; how he would stand still as if listening, with a piece of music paper in his hand, look up and down, and then write something. Dont had told me when I met him thus, not to speak or take any notice, as he would be very much embarrassed or very disagreeable. I saw him once, when I was taking a party to the wood, clambering up to an opposite height from the ravine which separated us, with his broad-brimmed felt hat tucked under his arm; arrived at the top, he threw himself down full length, and gazed long into the sky.

"Beethoven sat to me for nearly an hour every morning. When he saw my picture, he observed that the style of hair pleased him very much; other painters had always dressed it up as if he were going to court, not at all as he generally wore it. The oil painting for my brother-in-law is larger than the lithograph; in the former, Beethoven holds in his hand a sheet of music paper, and the back ground is a country scene at Mödling.

"Beethoven's house at Mödling was extremely

simple ; so, indeed, was his whole manner of life. His dress consisted of a light blue coat, with yellow buttons, white waistcoat and neckcloth, such as were then worn, but everything about him was very *négligé*. His complexion was florid, the skin rather pock-marked, his hair the colour of blue steel, for the black was already changing to grey. His eyes were a bluish grey and exceedingly vivacious. When his hair streamed in the breeze, there was a sort of Ossian-like demonism about him. But, when talking in a friendly way, he would assume a good-natured, gentle expression, particularly if the conversation were agreeable to him. His features vividly expressed every change of mood. I remember his telling me that he was a diligent opera-goer, and liked to sit at the top of the theatre ; partly, no doubt, from his constant desire for retirement, and partly because, as he said himself, the general effect is better there."





## CHAPTER XIX.

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### *DERNIÈRE PENSÉE MUSICALE.*



URING the year 1824, there appeared in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, a little pianoforte piece, with the superscription, "Written by desire on the afternoon of August 14, 1818, by Beethoven." This was afterwards—though, of course, wrongly—published as *Dernière Pensée Musicale*, and excited considerable interest. The newspaper relates the following incident, which presents the master as the intelligent, refined, and true artist—

"From the terrace of the Jagdschloss, in the Baumgarten at Prague, I was once watching, not without curiosity, two young ladies on the seat, nearest to my left, in lively discussion over some papers, which seemed too large for ladies' letters and too small for drawings. Just then a merry boy rushed into the Baumgang, and shouting out 'The father! the father!' the young girls quickly gathered up their sheets and ran joyfully after him. I was attracted to

the vacant place by the sight of a leaf that had been dropped there; and, lo and behold! I found on rather a shabby piece of paper the accompanying composition, which would itself have revealed its author, had no name been placed to it. My fair friends soon returned. Their steps quickened and their eyes brightened when they saw the missing paper in my hands. 'O sir,' cried one of them before she came up, 'how kind of you to have brought me my treasure.' This charming speech was of course a more imperative command to me to return the paper, than even the incontestable ownership of the young lady, whom I now perceived to be an elegant brunette, with an intelligent head and a peculiar and almost painful smile around her finely-cut mouth. I could not allow the beautiful apparition to disappear at once. I learnt from my fair enthusiast that Beethoven wrote the piece at the earnest request of a lady unknown to him, and that the fortunate owner had lent it to her to look at. 'And,' she continued, more vivaciously, her dark eyes, hitherto half-hidden, sparkling to their inmost depths, 'just as I was seriously discussing it with my companion'—I was then first made aware of the pleasing presence of a blue-eyed blonde, beaming with health and good humour—'we were interrupted.' 'Colestina,' said the blonde, with a smile, 'cannot forgive me for not shedding some tears over her music.' 'Monstrous exaggeration,' interrupted Colestina, with a charming pout, 'if no

tear of affection for the divine spirit of the artist dims your eye, Clara, you must perceive his genius even in these slight melodies, and must understand how his every thought finds expression in tones. Ah, sir,' she exclaimed, turning to me, 'I see from your sympathy that you are a musician. Do you not perceive how the divine singer, disturbed by the bold request of my friend, yet enticed by his lively fancy in spite of himself, has depicted the passing thoughts and even the disturbance itself in his music; do you not see how he has presented them to the lady, saying, with gentle good-natured irony, that your wish alone has evoked these strains?' 'Do you not see,' chimed in Clara merrily, 'in this long crotchet pause the melancholy thoughts of the unrivalled hermit of Vienna; do you not hear at the conclusion the significant sigh with which he returns the page; and do you not think it remarkable that his distraction even should be of such immense importance to my Colestina?'

"The fair girls' dispute was far too charming to be put an end to by a decisive opinion. And was not each in her own way right? I promised to submit the matter to higher authority, and thus acquired a copy of the composition.

"I put the question as to its meaning before four musicians. They were told nothing about its origin, or how I came by it, only that Beethoven had written it for a lady who was a stranger to him. The piece was played twice without a word being exchanged;



then each gentleman wrote down his opinion without looking at the music. A fifth musician, who had been told nothing about the results of this experiment, and only received the same information that had been given to the others as to the origin of the composition, likewise gave a written opinion after three hearings.

"These are the five opinions, word for word, as they were hastily written down—

"I.—'Beethoven begins by expressing the lady's troublesome request that he would write something in her album; he considers, and determines that he will get rid of her in a few bars; is only indifferently polite to her, and says at the end—One is always bothered by the fair sex.'

"II.—'Beethoven is surprised at being asked by a lady he does not know to write in her album, but quickly makes up his mind; and, though he seems to find it rather an intrusion, does it to oblige a lady.'

"III.—'What shall I write? Nothing takes shape from my musings. May you perceive in the confusion goodwill and warmheartedness.'

"IV.—'Do you think to make use of the artist's mind? Away! I see the fine net you are craftily and cunningly weaving around me, and which I could easily tear; and yet I feel enticed. For is it not the same yearning after those far-off strains above us which irresistibly attract my spirit, and, in a weaker measure, yours? And, although strangers, we are united,

and bound together by a relation of the soul. But—do you understand me?’

“V.—‘I am to compose, then? Yes, I will write you something. You great people think that you have only to command, and that your gracious smile will delight and exalt us! Ha! how much higher is the artist who rules the world, and you with it! The holy of holies is open to him. Yes, love! Perhaps you know what that is? There, I have composed something for you.’





## CHAPTER XX.

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### *A SWEDISH POET.*



THE following notice is like a hasty crayon sketch of an important incident in the life of a great man. On the 17th January, 1819, the Judicial Faculty in Vienna gave a grand concert for the benefit of their widows and orphans. With his usual generosity Beethoven had lent them his magnificent and ever popular A major Symphony. He, indeed, conducted it himself, and the work was received as usual with enthusiastic applause.

The Swedish poet, Per Daniel Amadeus Atterbom, was present on the occasion. In 1867, his account of it appeared in Germany, wherein he describes the impression produced upon him by our master.

“I also saw Beethoven at a private concert. He is short, but strongly built, has musing melancholy eyes, a lofty commanding forehead, and a countenance bearing not a trace of happiness. His deafness is the main cause of this, for he is now

what is called stone deaf. For this reason, also, he loves solitude, and rarely speaks to anyone. He lives on a pension given him by three princes, and composes all kinds of musical works with restless fire and industry. He is also bringing up a poor nephew with much care and affection. They say, and I readily believe it, that he is naturally warm-hearted, sincere, unselfish, and energetic.

“He conducted the concert at which I saw him, when the programme consisted only of his own, or music which he knew by heart and could bear in his mind ; for, although his sharp eye nearly always detects the character of the performance, I perceived, by a decided, though brief, confusion in the time, and the omission by the performers in their anxiety of a *piano*, that he could hear nothing, for both mistakes escaped him. He stood as if on a distant island, directing his dark demoniacal harmonies with the strangest movements. For instance, Beethoven indicates a *pp* by gently kneeling down and stretching out his arms to the floor ; for a *ff*, he springs up like an elastic bow set free, seems to rise above his usual height, and spreads both arms widely out ; and between these two extremes he constantly oscillates.”



## CHAPTER XXI.

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### *OLD ZELTER.*

**N**YONE with any knowledge at all of Goethe's writing is acquainted with his correspondence with Zelter. It is not, indeed, one of the most valuable portions of Goethe's legacy, for the quondam journeyman mason never, even in his own art, passes beyond the professional horizon ; but there is much that is characteristic in his account of Beethoven, whose artistic greatness he, in the end at least, perceived.

He became acquainted with Beethoven at Berlin in 1796, where the latter had frequently improvised at the Academy of Singing. Zelter was then director of this institution, and, as such, would of course be regarded by Beethoven as a worthy fellow-artist. During a journey through Austria, he writes from Vienna, July 19th, 1819, to his great friend at Weimar—

“Beethoven, whom I longed to see once more in

this world, is living in the country, and no one can tell me where. I had a mind to write to him, but was told that he was almost unapproachable, as his hearing was nearly gone. Perhaps it was better for us to remain as we were : a meeting might be painful to us both."

Beethoven was then living in the closest seclusion, being occupied with the composition of his Grand Mass. Zelter could therefore only indicate the nature of his surroundings.

"Music is very much appreciated in Vienna, an especial preference being shown for the Italian composers ; and there is really a great deal of culture among the public, for, although many things please, only what is good is retained. An indifferent opera is readily listened to if well performed ; but a first-rate work is neglected, unless rendered in the best possible manner. Beethoven is exalted to the heavens because he works so hard and is still living ; but it is in the works of Haydn that the real national sentiment is most truly and perfectly expressed. Yet they seem to ignore him, although receiving constant pleasure from his music."

On August 16, Zelter wrote the following personal details—

"Beethoven has gone into the country, but no one knows where. He recently wrote to a lady friend from Baden, but he is not there now. He is intolerably *maussade*, and some people call him a fool.

That is easily said. The Lord forgive all of us our sins ! The poor fellow is quite deaf; and I can sympathise with him from my own feelings, when I look at the players here, and find my fingers, one after the other becoming useless. A little while ago Beethoven went to a restaurant, sat down to a table, where he remained for about an hour buried in thought. Then he called out to the waiter, 'What have I to pay?' 'You have had nothing yet, sir. What shall I bring?' 'Bring what you like, and leave me alone!'

"The Archduke Rudolph is his patron, and gives him an annual pension of 1500 gulden. With this he must be able to make himself comfortable like the rest of the children of the muses in this city, who look as if they lived like princes."

The Archduke Rudolph gave Beethoven 600 florins (1200 marks) per annum ; and the sums he received from Kinsky and Lobkowitz had been reduced by financial changes in 1811 to 480 and 280 florins respectively. These pensions were his only fixed income, and he had to provide for the maintenance of his nephew. All through life his pecuniary affairs were embarrassed, and this had a deleterious effect on his creative efforts.

Zelter continues—

"Vienna, September 14th, 1819.

"The day before yesterday I was going to see Beethoven at Mödling, and as he happened to be



coming to Vienna, we met on the way. We alighted, and embraced each other warmly. The unhappy man is practically quite deaf, and I felt almost moved to tears. I went on to Mödling, he to Vienna. The neighbourhood is indescribably lovely. I went over the Brühl establishment and the castle of Lichtenstein, which is well kept up. The beautiful Gobelin tapestries and old furniture, and well-preserved family pictures, are worth looking at. I cannot omit to mention an incident which amused me not a little.

“The music publisher, Steiner, was with me on this expedition, and as it is not easy to talk to a deaf person in the public road, a meeting was arranged with Beethoven to take place at four o'clock in the afternoon at Steiner's shop. We returned to Vienna immediately after dinner, and, feeling as dull as ditch-water and as tired as a dog, I laid down and slept so soundly that I forgot all about the appointment.

“When I got up I went to the theatre, and the sight of Beethoven some distance off struck me like a thunder-clap ; and he felt likewise when he saw me ; but this was not the place to enter into explanation with a deaf man. The point of the story was this :—In spite of much blame, deserved or undeserved, Beethoven enjoys a reputation which only falls to the lot of eminent men. Steiner had announced that at four o'clock Beethoven would appear for the first time in the ‘Paternostergässl,’ and had invited some friends. The shop was so small it could only hold some five

or six people, and it was filled to overflowing by fifty persons, who all waited in vain. I only heard of it the next day, when I received an apologetic letter from Beethoven (very luckily for me) stating that he too had slept through the time of the rendezvous."

Zelter is wrong in calling this Beethoven's first appearance in the "Paternostergässl"; the large number of visitors is, therefore, still stronger proof of his great reputation; and Beethoven's letter, dated September 18th, may be inserted here, as it does not appear in "Beethoven's Letters"—

"My dear Sir,—That I took you in the other day, as they say here, was not my fault ; unforeseen circumstances deprived me of the pleasure of spending an hour with you, which would have been most enjoyable to me, and beneficial to art. I am sorry to hear that you are leaving Vienna the day after to-morrow. My sojourn in the country has not been so advantageous to me this year as usual, owing to the weakness of my hearing. It is not improbable that I may return the day after to-morrow; and if you have not departed by the afternoon, I shall hope to tell you by word of mouth how much I love and esteem you, and what pleasure it would give me to be with you. In haste,

Your most devoted friend,

"BEETHOVEN."

Partly on account of this friendly reception, Zelter in 1825 recommended the young *litterateur*, L. Rell-

stab, to the master, and as one of the results of the visit was the complete picture which Rellstab gives of Beethoven's life at that time, the above extract is worth inserting.





## CHAPTER XXII.

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### THE "MORGENBLATT."



LETTER from the Stuttgart *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*, which had then a wide circulation, gives us an insight into the inner and outward life of the master during the composition of the Grand Mass. It is dated October, 1819, and runs thus—

"Our Beethoven, who is, we may say, among musicians what Goethe is among poets, has undertaken to compose a cantata for the Musikverein; and the text is by that tasteful writer, Herr Bernard, his old and trusted friend, and editor of the *Vienna Zeitung und Zeitschrift*. According to report, the progress of this work will be interrupted for a short time, as the Archduke wishes to have a new mass from our artist.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The cantata was the oratorio, "The Triumph of the Cross," which was never finished, although the "Verein der Musikfreund des Oesterreichischen Kaiserstaats" had ordered and partly paid for it. We hear from no other authority that the

“Beethoven continues to enjoy the encouraging friendship of this noble patron of musical art, to the honour alike of prince and artist. Time, far from weakening, serves only to strengthen their true and deep attachment. As the Archduke is also Archbishop of Olmütz, the lovers of church music may anticipate many delightful additions to their repertory.

“It is impossible to give an adequate description of Beethoven’s free, simple, and hermit-like life. He is entirely devoted to art, and his only tribute to society is the fruit of his genius. But he does not by any means despise the confidential intercourse of a small circle; and before he became so deaf, he used to enliven the meetings of his chosen friends by his cheerful, natural bearing, apt and often pungent wit, and his outspoken opinions. He watches over his nephew, of whom he has great hopes, with untiring fatherly love. Time will show whether he is mistaken in his anticipations. At any rate, this trust is a sign of his warm feeling, which shows itself in many ways, in spite of a somewhat boorish exterior.

“He spends some time in reading the classic works of different periods, and is particularly fond of the old historians. He rarely shows himself to passing and merely inquisitive observers, such as make up the crowd of ordinary, superficial travellers, who care for

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Archduke ever “wished” for the mass. On the contrary, it was Beethoven’s voluntary determination to bring all his powers to the celebration of this grandest event in his noble friend’s life.

nothing but a few lines for their albums. His unconventional behaviour is severely blamed by such people, who, though utterly wanting in good breeding themselves, talk a great deal about politeness. A better acquaintance with Beethoven removes every suspicion of affectation and studied egotism, and shows that he is a thorough child of nature. It is a gala day to his many enthusiastic admirers when he appears with the power and inspiration of an Orpheus. Unfortunately for art, this has been of rare occurrence, for had he come into closer contact with the public, the power of his commanding presence would have checked the evil tendencies of the music of the day, and their present prevalence would have been impossible."

The lament over the increasing "quack culture," and the growing number of "scrapers" and "piano-forte drummers," although very justifiable, and quite after Beethoven's own heart, is foreign to our present purpose.





## CHAPTER XXIII.

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*DR. W. C. MÜLLER.*



E met with Dr. Müller in the notices of Beethoven's boyhood. He had been for more than forty years "tutor and teacher in the Hanseatic town of Bremen"; and in the summer of 1820, after half a century of hoping and waiting, went to Italy, the country "from whence all political, Christian, and æsthetic culture, have been diffused." On this journey he and his daughter Elise beheld their musical "idol," Beethoven, whose compositions had for years, through their exertions, been extensively cultivated in Bremen. In 1824, Müller published his "Letters to German friends," among which the following, dated Vienna, October 26, 1820, and addressed to the Conferenz-rath, Gaehler, at Altona, is of interest—

"The wide-spread popularity of music, and especially of skilful pianoforte playing, is incredible. In every house there is a good instrument. We found



five, by different makers, at Banker Gaymüller's. The young ladies play particularly well. Hummel told me that in Vienna there were a hundred ladies who played better than he did. This may be true as regards manipulative dexterity; but where do we find his power and improvisation? We heard several ladies, among them Frau von Mosel and Baroness Ertmann; the latter has studied under Beethoven, and seemed to us to surpass them all. Other pianists rattled off the most difficult passages with magical rapidity, but they knew nothing of the spirit or even the character of a composition; they neither touched the imagination nor the heart.<sup>1</sup>

"We have likewise heard the greatest pianoforte virtuosi: Czerny, Pixis, Halm. The much praised Moscheles was away travelling, and Czerny was the only artist who could be persuaded to play Beethoven's last great sonata, with the fugue at the end (Op. 106). Halm is an amiable man, and we spent several pleasant evenings with his family. He served as an officer during the late war; but out of love for the art, exchanged the military for the musical profession. He has, I believe, already written fifty works, among which his duet sonatas are particularly noticeable. He composes in Beethoven's style, with

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<sup>1</sup> It was this tendency towards mere virtuosity which finally estranged Beethoven from pianoforte music. Czerny's pupil, Liszt, first set limits to these mechanical displays, and directed them to the production of the highest artistic effects.

less ability, indeed, but more regularity than the greatest of living musicians.

“Beethoven is, perhaps, also the greatest æsthetic artist. His profound works are far in advance of their time; and, just as Sebastian Bach’s compositions have been revived a hundred years after they were written, so will Beethoven’s be. Many of his earlier works are much appreciated by the fashionable world. He seems less understood in Vienna than with us, or perhaps he has been forgotten again.

“As I have ventured to compare Beethoven to Bach, you will doubtless like to hear more of so extraordinary a genius. My Elise was quite set upon seeing her favourite; of speaking to him there was little hope, on account of his deafness. We have derived such infinite pleasure from his works that we could not leave Vienna without at least beholding the outward form of this richly imaginative spirit. Some years ago he invited us to visit him, and warned us not to be misled by the Viennese, who regard him as crazy. They certainly do express unfavourable opinions about his peculiarities and strange manners, but they all agree that he is a genius, although few are acquainted with him. Those who know the soundness of his understanding and the purity of his heart, entertain the sincerest friendship for him. This much is certain: he is a stranger to the world, the court, politics, and the art of dissimulation. He lives in his own art-world, like a monarch in the kingdom of music.

“No one knew where he lived. In the summer he was at Mödling, a beautifully situated village, three hours’ journey from Vienna. When we went there to find him, his housekeeper told us he had gone out walking early in the morning, and might return in the evening; but that it was very likely he would not be back for three days. Between the cliffs behind the house, and amid overhanging pine trees, was a lovely mountain meadow with a running brook. ‘That,’ I exclaimed, ‘must be Beethoven’s retreat, it would suit him exactly.’ We learnt in a few days that he had gone to the city, and hurried after him. He apologised for his appearance, talked about the confused state of things in the world, the general bad taste in music, and was pungently witty in his remarks on politics. On my asking about his pension, he said that when he was invited to go to Cassel as bandmaster, three princes offered him 2000 gulden to remain in Vienna. But one of the three had become a bankrupt, another had broken his neck, and the third was his pupil, Duke Rudolph, who had hitherto paid his share. Beethoven lost his savings through his brother; but when the latter died, he took his son to live with him, and is bringing him up like his own child.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The slight errors in this statement are easily corrected. It has been repeatedly said that owing to financial changes the 4000 florins had diminished to 1360, and that this sum was only obtained after a long law suit. Beethoven certainly did lose part of his savings through his younger brother, Karl, as he gave him about 10,000 Vienna gulden to “make life more easy to him” in his last severe illness.

“He lost his hearing through a cold, which probably affected the ear; because, through constant use, this had become the most sensitive, and, therefore, the weakest part of his body. He thought that the use of ear trumpets had destroyed what little hearing remained to him. What greater loss could befall a man whose whole life and happiness are bound up in music? He no longer hears the effect of his own tone-pictures, nor the sounds of nature in the little birch wood at Mödling, which, as his symphonies show, inspired him with so many artistic themes. In those lovely regions I have heard that leading theme, g g g—e, in the cry of a well known bird.<sup>1</sup>

“He exultingly showed us the magnificent piano which the London Philharmonic Society had presented to him. They must be a noble people who can thus appreciate and reward art. They have no public censor, and speak and write with perfect freedom even about the king and the most powerful minister! He called himself a fool for not accepting the invitation of the English lovers of music, on account of his attachment to Vienna, where art is insanely followed as a fashion, without being truly understood, valued, or rewarded. ‘If a sincere independant opinion

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Müller is thinking of the motive in the C minor Symphony, of which Beethoven said: “It is Fate knocking at the door.” The last note is, of course, E flat, not E, as Müller writes.

escapes me, as it often does, they think me mad,' he added.<sup>1</sup>

"To divert his attention from a dark chapter in his life, we asked him to improvise; but he was not to be persuaded; probably, because he would not have been able to hear the expression in his playing, and feared to forfeit our good opinion. E. had to play. He asked if she did not compose, and when she said she had no one to teach her, he replied, 'But you have Riem. He is an excellent man.'<sup>2</sup>

"He invited us to take coffee with him the next day but one, meanwhile he would arrange his furniture, which was in a great state of confusion. When we came, the same chaos reigned in his rooms. He will receive no help from his friends, nor accept any invitations to dinner, for fear of compromising his independence. Freedom is his chief good.

"Everything he says is peculiar, tinged with satirical humour, and quite opposed to the ordinary hum-drum style. When we meet, I shall be able to tell you much that is interesting about this wonderful man.

"His outward appearance is powerful and rugged :

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<sup>1</sup> What is said about Vienna and England is true enough; but the piano was a present from the famous maker, Broadwood, and is now in the possession of Franz Liszt, at Weimar.

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Riem was organist and director of the Vocal Academy at Bremen. Beethoven wrote to him about the *Missa Solennis*.

protuberant cheek bones ; high, broad brow ; short, angular nose ; and bristling hair, streaked with grey. But he has a delicate mouth and fine speaking eyes, which every moment reflect his quickly changing thoughts and feelings, now graceful and loving, then wild, threatening, and terrible. How pertinent are his remarks on politics, morals, and æsthetics !

“Beethoven is one of those to whom art suffices ; and the little circle in which he moves is his world, the rest of life seeming to him like a dreary wilderness. Such men, says the fanciful Hofmann, are always children, and display little pedantries and awkwardnesses, which expose them to the contempt of the ignorant. In such spirits often burn the flame of a higher knowledge, and everything in the wild whirl of chequered life is foreign to the work which is all in all to them, and to which they are heart and soul devoted.”

The author chiefly gathered his material for the obituary notice in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, in 1827, from this letter, although it contains several inaccuracies. Leaving these to be corrected by what has been already stated, we add two or three characteristic traits, which Dr. Müller described from later recollections—

“His dress, when he was most busy composing, showed how little he knew of the world or troubled himself about conventional forms and material matters. For instance, he was not acquainted with the custom

of wearing collars; and he asked a friend, who had made him some linen shirts, what the use of the collar was. 'Ah! to keep one warm,' he said to himself, and stuffed it under his waistcoat."

The following serves as a supplement to the above—

"His ideas of civic liberty and his indulgence for others may, perhaps, have been the reason why he always entered recklessly into conversation at the restaurant, where he usually took his frugal dinner, and would criticise and satirise the government, the police, and the habits of the great. The police were aware of it, but either because they thought him crazy, or out of respect for his brilliant genius, they left him in peace. He therefore concluded that nowhere was there greater freedom of speech than in Vienna. But his ideal government was the English, by which he tested every other form."

Dr. Müller no doubt had the following anecdote from Frau Streicher, who was at that time Beethoven's best adviser in domestic matters—

"He was infinitely superior, morally, to the majority of his companions and fellow artists in that luxurious city. Let us give an example of his peculiarly strict notions. He once dismissed a housekeeper, who was in other respects an excellent servant, because she had told an untruth with a view to benefitting him. A lady friend, who had procured him this housekeeper, was questioning him about his severity, when he replied, 'Anyone who tells a lie has not a pure heart, and cannot make pure soup!'"





## CHAPTER XXIV.

*FRIEDRICH STARKE.*



THE following notes were made for a biography of Beethoven, which Dr. F. S. Gassner, Royal Musical Director at Carlsruhe, had thought of writing in 1840. Starke, whose own words inform us as to his position and circumstances, has become known to the musical world generally by his Piano-forte School, to which Beethoven was a contributor. He was born in Saxony in 1774. His good-tempered, amiable disposition, and more especially his thorough knowledge of wind instruments, made him a favourite with Beethoven, who frequently invited him to dinner; for in such seasons of rest from work, Beethoven liked to talk over the purely technical part of his art. Although Starke only gives us anecdotes, these are equally characteristic and authentic. We arrange them chronologically—

### I.

A MUSICAL BREAKFAST IN 1812.

“Friedrich Starke, when bandmaster-in-chief to

the Royal and Imperial infantry regiment, Hieronymus Colloredo, had succeeded in gaining favour with Beethoven, who gave him several military compositions. Beethoven used to desire Starke to determine for him the capacities and effects of the different wind instruments. Far from being proud, Beethoven was familiar and friendly with all whom he found sincere and good-hearted. To the question 'How do you do,' he would often answer, 'As well as a poor musician can do.' Starke was frequently invited to dinner, after which he had the pleasure of hearing Beethoven improvise. But most memorable and agreeable was an invitation to a breakfast, which was to Starke a veritable breakfast for his soul. Beethoven was lodging at that time, 1812, at the Mölker Bastion.<sup>1</sup> After partaking of the excellent coffee, which Beethoven used to make himself in a glass machine, Starke begged for some spiritual refreshment; whereupon Beethoven improvised in three different styles: first, in the strict manner; then in the fugal, in which a theme in semi-quavers was most wondrously worked out; and, lastly, in the chamber style, in which the composer, while expressing his own peculiar humour, performed marvellous technical feats. Starke, to show his respect for Beethoven, had brought his horn, and proposed to play with him the Sonata in F, with

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<sup>1</sup> This was the house Bettina went to. Beethoven called it his observatory, because it commanded a view of the glaciis and the Vienna wood.


horn, Op. 17. Beethoven agreed with pleasure ; but it was found, on tuning, that the piano was exactly a semitone too low. Starke offered to tune his horn a semitone lower, but Beethoven replied that this would spoil the effect ; he would rather transpose his part a semitone higher (F sharp instead of F major). Beethoven played marvellously ; his execution was so clear and beautiful that no one could have believed he was transposing. Beethoven praised Starke by saying that he had never before heard the shading of the Sonata, noticing especially the *pianissimi*. The whole was a breakfast for the gods."

The following incident must have occurred before 1815, for Beethoven's younger brother, Karl, died in that year—

## II.

### A SERENADE.

"Starke several times celebrated Beethoven's birthday, which was on August 25th, by a military serenade. The most remarkable was the performance which took place while Beethoven was with his brother at the 'Drei Läufer,' in the Alser Strasse, and which was an agreeable surprise to him. After the serenade, Starke and the military bandmaster, Delange (an Italian), who co-operated, and who was particularly pleased with the prospect of seeing, and perhaps hearing, Beethoven, took part in the other amusements. Starke asked Beethoven to improvise just for

a little while. 'The piano is very bad,' he answered, 'but I am willing to, if it will give you pleasure.' Beethoven began with a theme resembling a childish gambol, commencing something like this—  $\frac{3}{8}$   etc.; but which was developed in so interesting a manner that one could have listened for an hour; and he introduced into his fantasia some light, floating passages, every note of which was heard, although only breathed in a *ppp*. A divine evening for Starke, but the bandmaster, Delange, remained untouched."

The third anecdote, like the fifth, was written by Gassner from Starke's narrative; the former probably belongs to the time between 1816—18, when Beethoven still played at Streicher's sometimes. The delicate feeling for music which his nephew displayed on this occasion induced the uncle, in after years, to consult him about his new themes and melodies. The boy was born in 1807, so at this time he was nine or ten."

### III.

"A weekly musical meeting was generally held at Streicher's house, in a room built for the purpose on acoustic principles in the years ——. Pianoforte compositions were principally performed; and Beethoven, who seldom failed to be present, often took his nephew, Karl, with him on these occasions. One day, in the year ——, while someone else was playing, the boy was asleep on Beethoven's knee in

front of the piano. Then something by Beethoven was played, and at the first chord Karl suddenly awoke, and looked up with pleasure. He was asked how he could go to sleep, and what made him awake so suddenly; and whether he knew who the piece was by. He replied quickly, 'It is my uncle's music.' This incident increased not a little Beethoven's strong affection for the child."

The following pleasing circumstance Starke assigns expressly to the year 1820. But as Beethoven was not at Döbling at that time, we must substitute 1821, when he was still busy with the composition of the Grand Mass; no other year would be appropriate.

#### IV.

##### THE DINNER, 1821.

"Starke, who, as has already been said, was on friendly terms with Beethoven, was pianoforte teacher to his nephew, Karl; and one of the frequent occasions on which he dined with him is particularly worthy of notice. Beethoven had at that time taken up his summer quarters at Lower Döbling, where Starke often visited him; and one day, finding only the cook at home, he left his kind regards, promising to call again in the afternoon. 'When Beethoven returned,' says Starke, 'he asked the cook where I was gone. She did not know; but Beethoven guessed that I should dine at the hotel, Zum Finger (as both

of us often went there), and found me taking my soup; the waiter was just bringing the beef, but Beethoven sent him back, saying to me, "You shall have your beef in an hour at my house." We went together to the Johannes Chapel' (Beethoven had previously told Starke that he had played the organ when a boy). Starke being a friend of Herr Albert, to whom the chapel belonged, it was easy for him to get the key of the building and of the organ. He made use of the favourable opportunity, and begged Beethoven to give him some spiritual aliment before dinner. Beethoven agreed, and played nearly half-an-hour. This organ performance consisted of two preludes, the first *con amore*, with soft stops (Beethoven could then still hear the *piano* on the organ); the second was a fugue. His listener was delighted. What a pity that those strains could not have been preserved and perpetuated; but they passed away, and were only treasured in the memory of the bellows-blower, Starke, and the Royal and Imperial Councillor, Herr d'Arailza, who was then lodging on the second floor of Herr Albert's house—which communicated with the choir by a passage from the room—and who thought himself extremely fortunate in being at home at the time."

The last short notice is also worth quoting. It shows the happy and yet unhappy deaf man's complete absorption in his own creative powers in the last years of his life.

V.

"I called on him one morning, and being a friend, was at once admitted by the servant. I searched through the house in vain till I reached his bedroom. As knocking was useless, one generally entered unannounced ; and to my astonishment, I found Beethoven sitting in the middle of the room in his shirt. . . He had thickly lathered his face the evening before, and forgotten to shave. His absence of mind was a ludicrous, and at the same time a melancholy spectacle. The soap had dried over night, and looked like paste sticking to chin and cheeks. But not at all disconcerted, he only motioned to me to withdraw till he had put himself to rights, and he came out of the room in a few minutes."







## CHAPTER XXV.

J. RUSSELL.



RUSSELL'S "Travels in Germany in 1820—22" was published in Germany in 1825. The Englishman has, on the whole, fairly grasped Beethoven's characteristics, although the foreigner and non-musician are plainly perceptible. The time is apparently the autumn of 1831, when, after the completion of the principal part of the Grand Mass, Beethoven re-appeared in society. The Leipzig *Musikzeitung* announced, in the spring of 1822, that he had "several times improvised in a social circle in a masterly manner, and to the delight of all, proving that he still knew how to handle his instrument powerfully, humorously, and lovingly." Russell describes one of these evenings, which, in all probability was spent at the merchant Puthon's, whose wife was very musical—

"Beethoven is the most celebrated composer in Vienna, and in some branches of music the most eminent of his time. His power in harmony is

marvellous. Although not old, he is quite lost to society on account of his excessive deafness, and this misfortune has rendered him thoroughly unsocial. The carelessness of his dress gives him a savage appearance; his features are marked and prominent; his eyes expressive; his hair, which looks as if it had not been touched by comb or scissors for some years, falls over his broad brow in a disorderly mass, being comparable only to the serpents on Medusa's head. His behaviour is, on the whole, in accordance with this unstudied exterior. Affability and talkativeness do not belong to his character; he only unbends to a few intimate friends. His entire loss of hearing has deprived him of all pleasure in society, and has probably contributed in no small degree to the gloominess of his disposition. He used formerly to visit a certain tavern, where he spent the evening in a corner, quite cut off from the chatter and altercations of a public resort, drinking wine and beer, eating cheese and herrings, and reading the newspapers. One evening some one sat down by him whose appearance he did not at all like. He looked at the stranger, and then spat on the ground as if he had seen a toad, looked at his newspaper, and then again at the unbidden guest, his shaggy hair bristling up more and more wildly, till at length he burst out with the polite remark, 'What a frightful phiz,' and rushed out of the room.

"Even with his oldest friends, he must have his

own way, like a self-willed child. He always carries a little book with him, in which all his conversations are carried on in writing. He also jots down in his book (although it is unruled) every musical idea that occurs to him. To any other virtuoso these notes would be utterly incomprehensible, the more so as they have no relative value. But he preserves the general contour in his memory, and develops from this labyrinth of points and circles the most precious and wonderful harmonies. When he places himself at the piano, he is evidently utterly unconscious of the existence of anybody or anything except himself and his instrument; remembering how deaf he is, it seems impossible that he can hear all he plays. He will, therefore, often play without producing a sound. He only hears with spiritual ears; his eyes, and the almost imperceptible movement of his fingers, indicate that he is inwardly following his music in all its developments: the instrument is as dumb as its player is deaf.

“I heard him once, but it required no little tact to induce him to play, so great is his dislike of anything like a pressing request. If he had been directly asked to favour the company, he would have roundly refused; a little diplomacy was needful. Everyone left the room except Beethoven and the master of the house, who was one of his most familiar acquaintance. They were, by means of the note-book, carrying on a conversation about the Joint

Stock Banks, when the host, as if by chance, let his fingers wander on to the keys of the piano which was standing open beside them. Presently he began to run through one of Beethoven's compositions, making a thousand blunders and such a scrambling jumble of some passages, that its composer put out his hand to correct him. That was sufficient. Under some pretext his friend left him, and rejoined the guests in the next room, from whence they could hear and see everything, and were patiently awaiting the results of the manœuvre.

"Left to himself, Beethoven sat down to the piano. At first he only struck a few short detached chords, as if he were afraid of being caught doing something foolish ; but he soon forgot his surroundings, and for about half an hour lost himself in an improvisation, the style of which was exceedingly varied, and especially distinguished by sudden transitions. The amateurs were transported, and to the uninitiated it was interesting to observe how his inspirations were reflected in his countenance. He revelled rather in bold, stormy moods than in soft and gentle ones. The muscles of his face swelled, his veins were distended, his eyes rolled wildly, his mouth trembled convulsively ; and he had the appearance of an enchanter mastered by the spirit he had himself conjured."



## CHAPTER XXVI.

FRIEDRICH ROCHLITZ.



HE life of Mozart has familiarized the lovers of music with Friedrich Rochlitz : he was the first highly cultivated critic of music and musicians ; and in his *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* did (as Beethoven said of his successor and pupil, A. B. Marx) “something towards abolishing the mere stringing together of words.” As our master selected him for his biographer when on his death-bed, it cannot but be interesting to discover the reasons for that marked esteem which must have been inspired, not only by the perusal of his musical critiques, but from the acquaintance which he formed with Rochlitz in the summer of 1822. In the collection of essays which he published in 1830, entitled “For the lovers of Music,” he describes this intimacy at some length ; and, in regard to its characteristic features, with undoubted faithfulness. From these essays, we learn that the immediate object of his journey to Vienna

was to induce the two famous Viennese musicians, Salieri and Beethoven, to compose something for the Leipzig publishers, Breitkopf and Härtel, and to persuade Beethoven to write music to *Faust*.

If Rochlitz's criticisms of Beethoven are inadequate, both artistically and intellectually, the circumstance of the proposal with which he was commissioned made Beethoven more approachable and "unbending" towards a man who possessed undoubted intelligence and musical understanding; a great deal that is "truly Beethovenish" thus comes to light. Rochlitz writes from Baden, July 9th, "In my house," that is to say, with his wife—

"Now for the second of those musical chiefs, Beethoven; and of him only what I know from personal intercourse. If this is but little, it seems to me sufficiently significant—

"Never having seen Beethoven, I was hoping to as soon as possible, and on the third day after my arrival spoke about doing so to X., his confidential friend.<sup>1</sup> 'He lives in the country,' he said. 'Let us go there then,' said I. 'So we might, but his unfortunate deafness makes him more and more unsociable. He knows that you intended to come here, and wishes

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<sup>1</sup> The name omitted is doubtless Tobias Haslinger, of the firm of Stein, as the meeting afterwards took place in the Pater-nostergässl. He was always ready to do a service for Beethoven, who liked him and treated him as a friend. But there could be no confidence between Beethoven and such a thorough Viennese "Faijake."

to make your acquaintance ; yet we cannot be sure that he will not run away when he sees us coming, for the most perverse ill-humour, like the most exuberant good-humour, overtakes him suddenly without apparent reason, and is beyond his control. But he comes to town at least once a week, and always to us, as we take care of his letters. He is generally in a good temper at such times, and if you would so far humour the dear worried man as to let us send word to you when he is with us (it is but a few steps from your house), you could come in as if by accident.'

"I gladly agreed. The messenger came the following Saturday morning. I went immediately, and found Beethoven talking cheerfully to X. He is accustomed to his voice and understands him pretty well, divining a good deal of what he says from the movements of his face and lips. We were introduced to each other. Beethoven seemed pleased, but embarrassed. Had I not been prepared, I too should have been disconcerted by the sight of him ; not merely by his negligent and almost savage exterior, nor yet the thick black hair which bristled around his head, but I should have been startled by the *tout ensemble*. Imagine a man about fifty, rather below the middle height, but very sturdy and compact, with an exceedingly powerful frame, something like Fichte's, only stouter and with a fuller rounder face ; restless, sparkling, piercing eyes ; a red, healthy colour ; hasty in his gestures ; in the expression of



the face, and especially of the intelligent and vivacious eyes, a union or a rapid alternation of genial good-nature and dislike ; in the whole bearing that tension, that restless, anxious listening peculiar to deaf persons with keen perceptions ; now talking cheerfully, now relapsing into gloomy silence ; and, added to all this, the observer's own preconceived ideas. Such is the man who gives pure and intellectual pleasure to millions.

“ In a few broken sentences, he said something pleasant and kind. I raised my voice as much as possible, and speaking slowly and with great emphasis, expressed my heartfelt thanks for what his works had been and ever would be to me ; expatiated on some of my especial favourites ; told him how admirably his symphonies were performed in Leipsic, the whole of them being given every winter before delighted audiences. He stood close to me, looking attentively into my face, bending down his head, smiling to himself or nodding kindly, but not saying a word. Did he not understand me ? I was obliged to leave off at last ; when, warmly pressing my hand, he said abruptly to X., ‘ There are other places I must go to.’ As he left he said to me, ‘ We shall see each other again.’ When X. returned, after accompanying him to the door, I asked if Beethoven had understood what I had said. I felt much agitated. X. shrugged his shoulders, ‘ Not a word.’ We were silent for some time, and I will not describe my emotions. At last I said, ‘ Why

did you not repeat at least something to him, for he seems to understand you pretty well?' 'I did not wish to interrupt you, and he is very sensitive, besides I really thought that he would hear a good deal; but the noise in the street, his not being accustomed to your voice, and perhaps his very eagerness to catch everything, as he perceived that you were saying pleasant things, prevented him from hearing at all. He was so grieved!' I cannot describe the frame of mind in which I went away. That he whose strains have charmed the whole world should not be able to hear a sound, not even the voice of one coming to thank him, and that these thanks are only an additional trouble! I had almost determined never to see him again, and to communicate Herr Härtel's message by writing.

"About a fortnight after, just as I was going to dinner, I met the young composer, Franz Schubert, an enthusiastic admirer of Beethoven. He had been speaking to the master about me. 'If you want to see him unconstrained and in good spirits,' said Schubert, 'you have only to dine at the restaurant, where he has just gone for the same purpose.' He took me there. The seats were nearly all occupied: Beethoven was surrounded by friends who were strangers to me. He really seemed in excellent spirits, and responded to my recognition; but I purposely abstained from going up to him. I found a place where I could see, and as he spoke very loud,

heard most that he said. He did not exactly carry on a conversation, but an almost haphazard sort of monologue.

“Those around him said little, only laughed and nodded approbation. He talked philosophy and politics after his own fashion, and spoke in glowing terms of what he thought to be the incomparable excellence of England and the English, which sometimes sounded oddly enough. Then he related various anecdotes about the second occupation of Vienna by the French, to whom he bears no good-will. He talked with the greatest nonchalance and freedom, was highly original and naïve in his criticisms, and full of droll fancies. He appeared to me as a man of rich and penetrating intellect, boundless and un-resting fancy ; as if he had been left when a boy on some desert island to think and brood over all his store of knowledge and experience, till his fragments had gathered into a whole, and his ideas had become convictions, which he now proclaimed to the world with joyful confidence.

“When he had finished dinner, he got up and crossed over to me. ‘Ha ! how are you getting on in old Vienna,’ he said kindly. I answered by signs, drank to his health, and offered him a glass. He accepted it, but pointed to a small side room. This was just what I wanted ; I took the bottle and followed. There we were undisturbed, except by an occasional starrer, who, however, soon walked off. He produced

a tablet for me to write when he did not understand. He began by praising Leipsic and its music, especially the selections performed in the churches, at concerts, and theatres. He knew nothing else of Leipsic, having only passed through when a youth on his way to Vienna (?) 'And if I could get nothing to read about Leipsic but dry statistics, I should peruse them with pleasure,' he said; 'they would show understanding and goodwill to all; but here on the contrary. . . !' Then he burst out into a violent tirade. When he was calm again, he said, 'You hear nothing of mine here.' 'Not in the summer?' I wrote. 'No,' he cried, 'nor in winter either.' 'What would you hear? *Fidelio*?' 'They cannot give it, and would not care to hear it.' 'The symphonies?' 'They have no time for them.' 'The concertos?' 'Nobody plays anything he has not himself written.' 'The solos?' 'They have long been out of fashion here, and fashion is everything. At the utmost, now and then Schuppanzigh produces one of my quartets, or something of the sort.'<sup>1</sup>

"With all its exaggeration, there was truth in what he said. When he had given vent to his feelings, he came back to Leipsic. 'But,' said he, 'you really live at Weimar.' My address might have led him to think

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<sup>1</sup> This is an error of memory. Schuppanzigh had been absent from Vienna since 1816, and did not return till 1823. Joseph Böhm was indeed giving quartet performances at that time. Neither is it correct that Beethoven passed through Leipsic on his way to Vienna; he was there in 1796.

so. I shook my head. 'You do not then know the great Goethe?' I nodded vigorously. 'I know him too,' he said, striking his breast, and his countenance beaming with pleasure; 'I made his acquaintance at Carlsbad (Teplitz) heaven knows how long ago. Although I then heard with difficulty, I was not so deaf as I am now. What patience the great man had with me, and how much he did for me!' He related several stories, with some delightful details. 'How happy I was then. I would have died for him ten times over. While thus inspired I conceived my music to his *Egmont*; <sup>1</sup> and it has succeeded very well, has it not?' I used all the means I knew of to express my assent and pleasure. Then I wrote that we not only performed his music at every representation of *Egmont*, but generally once a year at a concert, accompanied with a sort of explanation consisting for the most part of those scenes from the poem to which the music chiefly relates. 'I know, I know,' he cried, 'since the summer at Carlsbad, I read Goethe every day—that is to say, whenever I read at all. He has spoiled Klopstock for me. You are surprised at the idea of my having read Klopstock! I have carried him about with me for years when I went out walking, and on other occasions. I did not,

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<sup>1</sup> The music to *Egmont* had, as we know, been written in 1810. Beethoven might easily have confused his first visit to the poet with subsequent meetings.

indeed, always understand him. He galops about so ; goes to too great extremes—always *maestoso* D flat major ! Is it not ? Still he is grand, and always exalts the mind. I made a guess at what I did not understand. If he would only not always be dying ! That will come soon enough ; now, at least, things are very well. Goethe lives, and makes us all live with him ; thus, his works admit of being set to music, and for the purpose, none are so good as his, only I do not care to write songs. . . .’

“This, dear Härtel, gave me the best of opportunities to bring forward your idea and proposal. Looking as serious as I could, I wrote down the proposition with your promise. He read it. ‘Ha,’ he cried, throwing up his hands, ‘there would be some work there, something might be made of it !’ He went on in this way for a time, favourably picturing the idea to himself, with his head thrown back and gazing fixedly at the ceiling. ‘But,’ he began, ‘I am busy with three other large works. Much is already cut out, in my head at least ; I must first get these off my hands—two great symphonies, and what is still more, an oratorio. And these will take a long time, for latterly I have not written so easily. I sit and think and think a long time before my ideas will come out on paper. I have a horror of beginning such great works. When I have begun, it is all right. . . .’ He talked like this for some time. I am doubtful, but we will hope, for the idea pleases

him, and he said several times that he would not lose sight of it.<sup>1</sup>

“Our third meeting was the most cheerful of all. He came here (to Baden) quite cleanly, tidily, and even elegantly dressed. It was a hot day, and during a walk in the Helenenthal, which is a very narrow promenade, and where everyone goes—even the Emperor and his court—Beethoven threw off his fine black coat and carried it on a stick across his shoulder, and rolled up his shirt sleeves. He stayed from about 10 o'clock in the forenoon till 6 in the afternoon. His friends, Jener and Bauer, were with him. He was in high spirits the whole time, sometimes quite comical, and whatever was in his mind came straight out. ‘At last I am unloosed,’ he exclaimed, and expressively enough. His sayings and doings were a series of eccentricities, and some of them extremely odd. But through them all shone a truly child-like good-nature, and carelessness and confidence towards all who came in contact with him. His scolding tirades, such as those against the Viennese which I mentioned above, are only explosions of phantasy and momentary irritation. Without any feeling of pride, bitterness, or hatred,

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<sup>1</sup> The symphonies were the ninth, with Schiller’s “Freude schöner Götterfunken,” and the unfinished tenth, with its intellectual and lofty idea of uniting the modern Christian world with the ancient mythical one. The oratorio was the *Triumph of the Cross*.



they are light-heartedly and good-naturedly rattled out in a confused, humorous mood, and then soon forgotten. He is only too ready to give away his last thaler to anybody who asks him, even to those who may have most deeply injured him, and with whom he had but an hour before been violently enraged.

“Add to this his recognition of any truly worthy and independent merit—the manner, for instance, in which he speaks of Handel, Bach, and Mozart ; for, although he will not allow his larger works to be found fault with (who, indeed, would have the right to do so ?), he does not over-rate them, and laughingly abandons his smaller ones, as perhaps no one else would. When he is once aroused, he lets loose a flood of hard-hitting witticisms, droll ideas, surprising and stirring combinations, and paradoxes. I think, in sober earnest, that he really seems amiable ; or if this expression shocks you, I will say that the rough, dusky bear is a true-hearted and confiding growler, and shakes his head in such a harmless, funny manner that one could not but like him and be kind to him, though he were nothing but a bear.

“But I must reserve the history of that day for verbal communication, or when should I, invalid as I am, and forbidden to write at all, come to a conclusion ? When I had seen Beethoven into the carriage, and was walking up and down that charming valley alone, my thoughts again became serious.

This time my reflections did not turn solely on the miseries which his affliction had brought upon him. I saw now that he too had his seasons of cheerfulness and contentment, and passed many happy hours in planning and dreaming about his art; he takes the bad with the good, bears it and forgets it; and who, after all, can do more? My reflections took a general turn. I imagined one situation after another in which a man, not from choice or free-will—which carry their own compensation—but by a peculiar union of the force of circumstances and of his own energies, must, in order to produce the best he has, have his own heart wrung, and perhaps be driven to the brink of suicide—a situation in which he could not have relieved the bitter pain of others, had he not himself been assailed by the sharpest pangs; nor have ever gladdened, quickened, and strengthened men's hearts, had his own never been enshrouded in the most dread darkness, or consumed by fiery passions.

“I would rather not describe what a confused feeling of horror possessed me as I sat in the dim mountain grotto by the wayside. I roused myself, and stepping out under the deep blue evening sky, I firmly laid hold on what I never ought to have let slip,—the thought of the faith we receive from the very beginning of our life, and can always keep with us if we will, and which is all that remains to us when the end comes! Then the bad spirits and ugly masks all disappeared like a meaningless, tormenting

dream before the morning light. The outer world looked quite different to me. I saw the brother and sister I wrote to you about the other day—the shepherd and the girl from whom I learnt those pretty Styrian songs; I saw them drive the cattle home down the mountain, and heard their joyous yodle resounding in the still air. Lower down were the old mountain beeches glowing in crimson and gold, and with the usually deceptive effect of such conditions of light, they seemed nearer to me than before. At my left the brook was gaily dancing over the stones, every wave sparkling. The evening bell was ringing at the Helenen Chapel, and the echo from the mountains blending with its tones softened their sharpness. And all this for me, for there was not a soul visible. Thus I arrived home, and was met at the gate by the servant with your longed-for letter, containing the news of our daughter's safe confinement."





## CHAPTER XXVII.

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*WILHELEMINE SCHRÖDER-DEVRIENT.*



IN the chapter on *Fidelio* (page 101), we spoke of a turning-point in the history of the rise of operatic art ; we referred to Schröder-Devrient. “ The slightest contact with this extraordinary woman gave me an electric thrill, and even now I see, hear, and feel her whenever I am inspired to artistic creation ” ; so writes Richard Wagner, whose artistic creation expresses that true tragic art, which, based on the nature of music, was manifested in Beethoven no less than in Æschylus, Shakespeare, and Goethe.

Wagner saw Schröder-Devrient at Leipsic in 1834, and she revealed to him the true nature of the drama ; for she was the daughter of the great tragic actress, Sophie Schröder, and having enchanted the German world by her representations of Mozart’s *Pamina* and Weber’s *Agatha*, she chose *Fidelio* in the autumn of 1822 for her benefit, with a view both to profit and fame. She was just seventeen, and “ had a

very miserable appearance," as Weber said of her in the spring of the same year; and Beethoven at first "was much displeased that his grand character should have been entrusted to such a child." But she had the best of teachers in her celebrated mother, with whom she learnt and studied her part. One of her friends, Claire von Glümer, describes the *début* of this first true Leonora, from the artist's own narrative. Could we afford to omit such an account? It is as follows—

"Beethoven had reserved to himself the right of conducting the opera, and at the general rehearsal he took the baton. Wilhelmine had never seen him before, and her heart beat when she beheld the violent gesticulations, agitated looks, and wild expression of the master, who was then quite deaf; when a *piano* was to be played he dropped under the music desk, at a *forte* he would spring up and utter the strangest sounds. Orchestra and singers fell into confusion, and at the conclusion of the rehearsal, the bandmaster, Umlauf, was obliged to undertake the painful task of intimating to the master that it was impossible for him to conduct his opera.

"On the evening of the performance, therefore, Beethoven seated himself in the orchestra, behind the bandmaster, so closely enveloped in his cloak that his glowing eyes were alone visible. Wilhelmine feared these eyes, and was indescribably nervous. But scarcely had she uttered the first few words when she felt possessed by a wonderful power: Beethoven,

the audience, all that she had studied, disappeared from her ; she was Leonora, living her life and suffering her sufferings. The illusion lasted till the prison scene, then her strength failed ; she knew she was unequal to the part she had to perform ; the next moment her growing dread expressed itself in her countenance, her movements, but this was so appropriate to the situation that it produced the most telling effect on the audience : there reigned that breathless silence which has as powerful an effect on the actor as the loudest applause.

“Leonora rouses up, throws herself between her husband and the murderer’s dagger ; the dreaded moment has come—the orchestra is silent, but possessed by the courage of despair, and in a clear, ringing tone she shrieked, rather than sung, the heart-rending line—

‘Tödt’ erst sein Weib !’

“Pizarro is going to repulse her, she draws a pistol from her bosom and points it at the murderer ; he recoils ; she stands immoveable in her threatening attitude. At the moment a flourish of trumpets announces deliverance, and the tension which had long sustained her gives way. She has scarcely strength to drive the murderer to the door with her pistol, when the weapon fell from her hands ; she was exhausted with her prodigious exertion, her knees shook, she leaned back, her hands convulsively clasped to her head, and uttered involuntarily that

famous unmusical shriek, which has been most unhappily imitated by succeeding representatives of Leonora. With Wilhelmine, it was an actual cry of terror, which penetrated the hearts of the hearers.

“The spell which bound every heart only yielded when Florestan exclaimed—

‘Mein Weib, was hast du um mich erduldet;’

She throws herself into his arms, half weeping, half rejoicing, and cries—

‘Nichts, nichts, nichts!’

“A thunder of applause burst forth that seemed as if it would never cease. The artist had found the true impersonation of Leonora; although she afterwards worked long and earnestly at her part, it remained in its essential features the same. In her, Beethoven also found his Leonora. He could not, indeed, hear the tone of her voice, but the soul in her singing was revealed in every expression of her intelligent face, and in the glowing life with which she was inspired. After the performance, he went up to her with a smile in his eyes, thanked her, and promised to compose a new opera for her—a promise which, unfortunately, was never fulfilled.

“Wilhelmine never met the master again; but amidst all the homage which she received in after years, Beethoven’s words of acknowledgment remained her most cherished memory.”

The following summer, with her aid, a magnificent performance of *Fidelio* was given at Dresden, under



the direction of C. M. Weber. In Paris, in 1830, after a performance of *Der Freischütz*, her acting in Beethoven's single opera revealed to the French the grandeur of German dramatic art. "Behold this woman," said a Parisian critic, "whom heaven seems to have made on purpose for Beethoven's *Fidelio*, she neither sings nor speaks like other artists; her acting does not conform to the rules of art; she seems as if she did not know that she was on the stage; she sings with her soul rather than her voice; her notes came from her heart rather than her throat; she forgets the public and herself, is completely absorbed in the character she is representing."

As we saw above, it was in 1834 that the young musician, Richard Wagner, first awoke to a sense of the highest poetry of dramatic art. And when, in the following year, he saw this "extraordinary woman" at Nuremberg, playing a part so utterly opposed to that of Leonora as the old-fashioned sentimental rôle of Emmeline in Weigl's *Swiss Family*, and saw what charming life and grace she imparted to this character, then did he first fully recognise the incomparable greatness of this artist, who gave him the power of reviving true dramatic art, by showing him its true nature and its existence in the innermost life of the human heart.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

*GRILLPARZER.*



HE recollections of Beethoven by the Austrian classic poet, Grillparzer, which here follow, were written in the beginning of 1840; Rellstab's essay, from which we shall presently gather some valuable facts, appeared at the same time. If Grillparzer's "Recollections" are of no great importance with regard to the master's character and work, they throw some light upon his outward life, and on the project which was at one time seriously entertained for a second opera. Grillparzer writes—

"In an essay by Herr Rellstab, entitled 'Beethoven,' I find a reference which is not altogether correct as to my relations with the great master, especially with regard to the text of the opera which I wrote for him. No blame rests with Herr Rellstab, who doubtlessly reproduced, with even verbal accuracy, what Beethoven said. The cause is rather to be found in the sad condition of the master during

the latter years of his life, which prevented him from always distinguishing clearly between what had actually happened, and what had been merely imagined.

“I will describe our meeting and its result with all possible faithfulness, as everything relating to a great man is of interest, and also because it gives me pleasure.

“I first saw Beethoven when I was a boy, perhaps about 1804 or 1805, at a musical evening at the house of my uncle, Joseph Sonnleithner, who was at that time partner in a music publishing firm in Vienna. Among those present besides Beethoven were Cherubini and Abbé Vogler.<sup>1</sup> Beethoven was then slight, and his hair still black; quite contrary to his later custom, he was most elegantly dressed, and wore spectacles, which I particularly remember, as in after years he dispensed with these aids to short sight. I cannot recollect whether he and Cherubini played; I only know that when supper was announced, Abbé Vogler was still at the piano, and beginning an endless number of variations on an African air, which he had himself brought from its native country. During his performance, the company gradually withdrew to the supper-room. Beethoven

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<sup>1</sup> The meeting took place in the summer of 1805; it was the same Sonnleithner who wrote the text to *Fidelio*! Regarding the two masters, Cherubini and Vogler, they were both, like Beethoven, invited to write an opera.

and Cherubini alone remained. At last the latter went also, and Beethoven was left alone with the indefatigable musician. Finally his patience was exhausted too, but Abbé Vogler, left to himself, still went on embellishing his theme with 'every variety of adornment. I had stayed behind in mute astonishment at the extraordinary scene. As is generally the case with early recollections, what took place afterwards remains a blank ; my memory fails me completely as to whom Beethoven sat next to at table, whether he conversed with Cherubini, or whether Abbé Vogler finally joined them.<sup>1</sup>

"A year or two afterwards, I spent the summer with my parents in the village of Heiligenstadt, near Vienna. Our rooms opened into the garden, Beethoven's looked on to the street ; both portions were united by a common passage leading to the staircase. My brother and I took little heed of the strange man as he shot by us with a grumble ; he had become rougher and very untidy in his dress. But my mother, who was a passionate lover of music, would now and then be tempted out into the passage when she heard him playing the piano, and would stand close to our door—not his—listening devoutly. This might have occurred two or three times, when one day Beethoven's door opened suddenly and he came out ; seeing my mother, he

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<sup>1</sup> Grillparzer afterwards said, verbally, that Beethoven was exceedingly respectful and attentive to Cherubini.

hastened back to his room, returned immediately with his hat on, and rushed down the steps out of doors. From that moment, he never touched the piano again. In vain did my mother assure him through his servant—her only means of communication—that, not only should no one listen to him, but that our door opening into the passage would be kept shut, and that her servant would go round by the way out through the garden. Beethoven remained inexorable, and his piano was untouched till the late autumn when we returned to the city.

“One summer afterwards I frequently visited my grandmother, who had a country-house in the neighbouring village of Döbling ; Beethoven was at Döbling at the same time. Opposite to my grandmother’s windows was the tumbledown house of a peasant, named Flohberger, notorious for his slovenliness. Besides his unsightly dwelling, Flohberger had a daughter with a very pretty face, but not a very good reputation. Beethoven seemed to take great interest in this girl; I can still see him walking along the Hirschengasse, with his white handkerchief in his right hand trailing along the ground, stopping at Flohberger’s yard gate, behind which the giddy girl was working vigorously with a fork on the top of a waggon of hay or manure, laughing incessantly. I never saw Beethoven speak to her ; he used to stand silently gazing, till the girl, who preferred the company of young peasants, would vex him

with a jeer, or persistently take no notice, when he would suddenly dash off, but he never failed to stop there the next time he passed. His interest even went so far that when the girl's father was sent to the village jail (called the Kotter) on account of a drunken brawl, he interceded personally for his acquittal, and after his fashion treated the parish authorities so brusquely that he very nearly became the involuntary companion of his imprisoned protégé.

"Afterwards I saw most of him out of doors, and two or three times at a coffee-house, where he was frequently in the company of a poet, long dead and forgotten, Ludwig Stoll, of the Novalis-Schlegel guild. It was said they were projecting an opera, but it is incomprehensible how Beethoven could have expected anything to serve his purpose from such a feeble driveller.<sup>1</sup>

"Meanwhile, I had begun my public career. After the appearance of *Ahnfrau*, *Sappho*, *Medea* and *Ottokar*, I heard from the chief director of the two court theatres, Count Moritz Dietrichstein, that Beethoven had asked him if he could induce me to write the text for an opera.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We have heard of Stoll through Reichart (see page 72). Stoll wrote the words of Beethoven's song, "An die Geliebte," composed December, 1811.

<sup>2</sup> This was owing to a request from the theatre direction for a new opera, in consequence of the brilliant success of *Fidelio* in 1822.

“I confess this request caused me no little embarrassment. Not only was the idea of writing an opera libretto altogether foreign to me, but I doubted whether Beethoven was still able to compose an opera, for he was now totally deaf, and his latest compositions, despite their great merits, were marked by a harshness which seemed to me at variance with the proper treatment of the voice. But the thought of giving a great man an opportunity for writing what would at any rate be a highly interesting work, overcame all other considerations, and I agreed.

“Among the dramatic materials which I had collected for future use were two subjects, either of which seemed suitable for operatic treatment. Intensest passion was the characteristic feature of one, but I neither knew of an actress competent to take the principal rôle, nor wished by an almost diabolical subject to tempt Beethoven any nearer to that already threatening abyss, the uttermost limits of the musical art.<sup>1</sup>

“I therefore chose the fable of Melusine, rejecting

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<sup>1</sup> These remarks show that in the opinion of this poet, Beethoven's Pegasus had already disappeared in the clouds. And this reveals the real reason why Grillparzer's text was never used : it failed in the intellectual depth which Beethoven had then reached in his art, and in which it would have been hard to find a poet on a par with him. This sketch is, therefore, only of biographical interest.



the reflective element as much as possible, and endeavouring by a preponderance of the chorus, a powerful finale and an almost melodramatic treatment of the third act, to conform to the peculiarities of Beethoven's latest style. I did not first consult the composer about the subject, as I wished to have perfect freedom for my own ideas; besides, it would, I thought, be easy to make any alterations afterwards, and he was not obliged to use the libretto at all unless he pleased. Indeed, to save him from the least feeling of restraint, I sent him the book through the same channel by which I received the request. I desired him to be in no way influenced or embarrassed by personal considerations.

“Two or three days after, Schindler, who managed Beethoven's business matters and wrote his biography, called on behalf of his chief, who was unwell, to invite me to visit him. I dressed and went immediately to the suburb of Landstrasse, where Beethoven was then living. I found him lying on an untidy bed, in grubby night clothes, with a book in his hand. At the head of the bed was a small door leading into the dining-room, which Beethoven attentively watched; and, when a servant went out with some butter and eggs, he could not, although in the midst of an earnest conversation, refrain from giving a searching look at the quantity being carried away—a sad sign of the mismanagement of his domestic affairs.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This was in the spring of 1823.

“When we entered, Beethoven got up and shook hands, and after many expressions of kindness and esteem, began to talk about the opera. ‘Your work lives here,’ he said, pointing to his heart; ‘I am going into the country in a day or two, and shall then begin the composition at once. Only I don’t know what to do with the Huntsmen’s Chorus at the beginning. Weber has used four horns; you see, therefore, I must have eight; what will that lead to?’ Although I did not in the least see the force of this reasoning, I told him that this chorus could be omitted without detriment to the whole. He seemed very pleased with this concession, and neither then nor afterwards took any further exception to the text, or desired any alterations; he even insisted on a pecuniary agreement then and there. I said, what was perfectly true, that I had never thought of being paid for my writings. (The result of this has been that my works, which, with the exception of Uhland’s, I regard as the best that Germany has produced since the death of her great poets, have altogether yielded scarcely as much as a single volume of travels or romance by any writer past or present). I could not suffer anything to pass between us on the subject. He might do as he liked with the libretto, but I would never make any contract about it with him. After a great deal of talking, or rather writing, for Beethoven could no longer hear what was said, I took my leave,

promising to visit him as soon as he was settled at Hetzendorf.<sup>1</sup>

"I hoped that he had abandoned the business view of the subject, but my publisher, Wallishauser, came to me in a day or two to say that Beethoven insisted on a pecuniary agreement. If I could not resolve to do this, would I make over my rights of ownership to Wallishauser, who would settle the rest with Beethoven, to whom such an arrangement had already been intimated. I was glad to get rid of the matter, so I accepted a moderate sum from Wallishauser, ceded to him all rights of authorship, and thought no more of the affair. I do not know whether they actually concluded a contract, but I think they must have done, or Wallishauser would, as usual, have poured forth his complaints to me over the money he had risked. I only mention this to correct Beethoven's statement to Herr Rellstab, that 'our ideas were not accordant.' He was, on the contrary, so determined on composing the opera, that he even made arrangements that would not be required until the work was completed.

"In the course of the summer (1823), I visited Beethoven by invitation, at Hetzendorf. Herr

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<sup>1</sup> In this and the following statement, Grillparzer is very incorrect; for in the "Conversations," which include his talks with Beethoven, there is distinct reference to concessions, agreements as to an honorarium, etc., *vide* "The Life of Beethoven."

Schindler, who accompanied me, said to me on the way, 'I don't know whether Beethoven has not been prevented by some pressing commissions from setting about the composition of the opera.'<sup>1</sup> I therefore avoided referring to it in conversation with Beethoven. We went out, and partly by word of mouth, partly in writing, conversed as much as was possible while walking along. I still feel touched by the remembrance of how, when we sat down to dinner, Beethoven went into the adjoining room and brought back five bottles, one of which he placed before Schindler, one beside himself, and three in a row in front of me, meaning no doubt to express in his own naïve good-hearted manner that I was to drink as much as I liked. When about to return to the city alone—for Schindler remained at Hetzendorf—Beethoven insisted on accompanying me. He rode with me in the open carriage as far as the gates of the city, where he got out, and, after warmly shaking hands with me, set off to walk the half (German) mile back alone. As soon as he had left the carriage, I saw a piece of paper lying on the place where he had been sitting, and thinking he had forgotten it, I motioned to him to return. But he only shook his head, burst out laughing as if he had played a capital trick, and walked rapidly away in the opposite direction. I opened the paper, and found it contained the exact fare I had agreed upon

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<sup>1</sup> He was then at work on the Ninth Symphony.

with my driver. He had by his manner of life become so estranged from all the usages of society, that it never occurred to him what an insult under any other circumstances such a proceeding would have been. But I took it as it was intended, and paid the driver with the money thus presented to me.<sup>1</sup>

"I only saw Beethoven once again, but I do not remember where. He then said to me, 'Your opera is ready.' Whether he meant that it was complete in his head, or whether the elements of it were contained piece-meal in some of the numberless note-books in which he jotted down, in a manner understandable only to himself, thoughts and figures for future use, I cannot say.

Certain it is that, after his death, not a note could be found indisputably referring to this work. I adhered to my determination of not reminding him of the matter by the slightest hint; and as conversation by writing was troublesome, I never approached Beethoven again, till in black attire, with a torch in my hand, I followed his coffin."<sup>2</sup>

We must reserve the conclusion of these "Recollections" for another more convenient place.

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<sup>1</sup> Beethoven did the same thing with other friends, with Karl Holz for example.

<sup>2</sup> There is no trace anywhere of sketches for this opera, of which Schindler has given the text in his "Beethoven Nachlass." Nor do I remember coming across any remarks about the work in Beethoven's handwriting.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

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J. A. STUMPF.



N extract from a letter written from Vienna to a friend in London, was published in a London journal, *The Harmonicon*, in January, 1824, under the title, "A day with Beethoven." A. Thuringian, harp manufacturer, of property and position in the English capital, when visiting his fatherland in 1816, saw several of our greatest poets and artists, and among them Goethe and Beethoven. His second visit to our master, in the autumn of 1823, is described in this sketch. We quote the faithful translation which appeared in the *Jahrbücher für Musikalischer Wissenschaft* for 1863.

The author, J. A. Stumpff, deserves more than a passing mention for his noble generosity to Beethoven in his last days. He writes—

"I will now fulfil the promise I made last summer, on my departure for Germany, of communicating from time to time anything I thought interesting in relation

to the fine arts, and especially to music, and as I said that I should not confine myself to any order with regard to time or place, I begin at once with Vienna—in musical matters the capital of Germany. Other cities surpass her in learning; indeed, the university is commonly considered one of the least important in the country. North Germany has always produced the best theorists, such men as Bach, Marpurg, Kirnberger, Schwencke, Türk; but the most celebrated musical artists have always been found in the South, and especially in Vienna, where Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Hummel, Maria von Weber, Spohr and others, not only received their musical education, but composed their most famous works. And at the present time Vienna can still boast a goodly array of distinguished musicians:—C. Kreutzer, Hadler, Mayseder, C. Czerny, Pixis, and that youthful pianistic prodigy—Liszt.<sup>1</sup>

“To give even a slight account of the present state of music in Vienna would far exceed the limits of a letter; I prefer, therefore, to devote my remaining space to Beethoven, the brightest ornament of the

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<sup>1</sup> If not absolutely accurate historically, this statement is correct in the main. These composers belong, at any rate by their works, to the Vienna school. But “that youthful pianistic prodigy,” F. Liszt, after giving a concert at Vienna, at which even the recluse, Beethoven, was present, and being thus, so to speak, consecrated by the Vienna School, went to Paris in the autumn of 1823. Through him this school has again attained the greatest perfection.



Kaiserstadt. But you must not expect anything like a biography; that I shall reserve for a future occasion. Now, I only want to give you a short account of a day's visit to that great man, and should it seem to you that I linger too long on trifles, pray excuse it on the score of my reverence for Beethoven, which makes me think everything interesting that has the slightest connection with him.

"The 28th September, 1823, will always remain in my memory as a *dies faustus*; indeed, I do not know that I ever spent a happier day. Accompanied by Herr H——, one of Beethoven's most intimate friends, and another Viennese gentleman, I started early one morning for Baden, a charmingly situated place, some twelve English miles from Vienna, and where Beethoven generally spends the summer months. As I went with Herr H——, there were no difficulties in the way of my reception. Beethoven looked at me very earnestly, and then shook hands as if I were an old friend. He evidently remembered my former visit in 1816, although it was only a short one—a proof of his excellent memory.<sup>1</sup>

"I was grieved to find a considerable change in his appearance, and I thought he looked very unhappy. His complaints to Herr H—— confirmed my

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<sup>1</sup> These two gentlemen were probably Streicher and Haslinger, Steiner's partner. It is possible that K. Holz was one of them, but he had at that time only a slight acquaintance with Beethoven; he played his quartets.

suppositions. I had feared that he would not hear a word I said, but I am happy to say I was quite mistaken, for when I spoke slowly and distinctly he heard everything. It was plain from his answers that nothing Herr H—— said escaped him ; but we neither of us used speaking trumpets. You may, therefore, conclude that the stories told in London about his deafness are exaggerations. But I must mention that when he plays the piano he generally snaps twenty or thirty strings (?), so heavy is his touch. Nothing can be more lively, spirited, and to use an expression which aptly characterises his symphonies, more energetic than his conversation when he is in a good humour ; but an unfortunate question, or an injudicious piece of advice (about the cure of his deafness, for example) is quite enough to estrange him for ever.

“He asked Herr H—— what was the highest note possible for a trumpet, *à propos* of a composition he was then engaged on. But the answer did not seem to satisfy him ; whereupon he remarked to me, that he had, as a rule, a great deal of trouble in obtaining information about the construction, character and compass of the principal instruments, even from their respective players.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Starke says the same thing : “When complaints were made about the difficulties in his works for a certain instrument, violin, horn, etc., Beethoven used to answer, ‘One must study hard.’” Haslinger was a composer especially of masses, and Beethoven

"He introduced his nephew, a handsome young fellow, about eighteen years of age, and the only relative with whom he is on friendly terms. 'You can ask him a riddle in Greek if you like,' he said, to show the youth's knowledge of that language. He is a living proof of Beethoven's goodness of heart; the most affectionate of fathers could not have made greater sacrifices than he has.<sup>1</sup>

"Having spent about an hour with him, we agreed to dine together, at 1 o'clock, in the romantic and beautiful Helenenthal, some two English miles from Baden. After visiting the baths and other objects of interest, we returned to his house about 12 o'clock, and as he was ready and waiting for us, we set out at once for the valley. Beethoven is a capital walker, and delights in rambling for hours through wild, romantic scenery. I am told, indeed, that he has sometimes been out whole nights on such excursions, and is often absent from home for several days. On the way to the valley, he often stopped to point out the prettiest views, or to remark on the defects of the new buildings. Then he would go back again to his own thoughts, and

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wished to know something about the trumpets for his Ninth Symphony.

<sup>1</sup> In my little book, "*Eine stille Liebe zu Beethoven, nach dem Tagebuch einer jungen Dame*" (Leipzig, 1875), the affairs of this relative form a very important chapter in the latter days of Beethoven's life.

hum to himself, in an incomprehensible fashion; which I heard was his way of composing, and that he never wrote a note till he had formed a definite plan of the whole piece.<sup>1</sup>

"The weather being exceptionally fine we dined in the open air; and being the only visitors at the hotel, we were by ourselves the whole day, which seemed to please Beethoven very much. Viennese cooking is famous throughout Europe, and such a sumptuous repast was prepared for us that Beethoven could not refrain from remarking on its profusion. 'What is the good of so many courses,' he exclaimed; 'man is little better than the animals, if he places his chief pleasure in eating'; and he made similar remarks in the course of the dinner.<sup>2</sup> Fish is the only food he cares about; trout is his favourite dish. He has a great aversion to any kind of restraint, and I believe no one in Vienna talks so freely as he does on all sorts of subjects, politics included. He hears with difficulty, but talks extremely well, and his observations are as characteristic and original as his compositions.

"Nothing that he said pleased me so much as his

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<sup>1</sup> At this period he no longer frequently stayed out whole nights; and the sketches that are left show that this was not at all his manner of composing.

<sup>2</sup> Haslinger was particularly addicted to the pleasures of the table, and was, on that account, regarded by Beethoven as chief among the "Faijaken."

remarks about Handel. I sat quite close to him and distinctly heard him say, in German, 'Händel ist der grösste componist der je gelebt hat' (Handel is the greatest composer that ever lived). I cannot describe the pathos, and I may say the sublimity with which he spoke of the *Messiah* of that immortal genius. We all felt moved when he said, 'Ich würde mein Haupt entblößen und auf seinem Grabe niederknien' (I would uncover my head and kneel at his grave). H. and I repeatedly, but vainly, tried to turn the conversation to Mozart. Whatever may be inferred from the expression, all that I heard him say was, 'We know who is the first in a monarchy.' Herr C. Czerny, who, by the way, knows every note of Beethoven by heart, although he never plays one of his own compositions without the book, told me that Beethoven was sometimes unbounded in his praise of Mozart. He remarked that Beethoven cannot endure to hear his own earlier works praised; and I learnt that the surest way of making him angry was to compliment him on his septet, trios, etc. His latest productions, which are regarded with so little favour in London, but which the young Viennese artists immensely admire, are his own favourites. I hear that he considers his second mass his best work.

"Beethoven is at present occupied with a new opera, called *Melusine*, the libretto of which is written by the famous but unhappy poet, Grillparzer. He concerns himself so little with new works of

living composers that when asked about the *Freischiitz* he only answered, 'I believe it was written by a man named Weber.'<sup>1</sup>

"You will be pleased to hear that he is a great admirer of many of the classic writers. He gives the preference to Homer (the "Odyssey" especially), and Plutarch; among our own poets he chiefly studies Schiller and Goethe, and is a personal friend of the latter. He holds, also, an unwaiveringly good opinion of the British nation: 'I like the noble simplicity of English manners,' he said, adding other expressions of eulogy. He seems still to cherish the hope of visiting England with his nephew. I must not forget to mention that I have heard a manuscript trio of his, for piano, violin, and violoncello, which appeared to me exceedingly beautiful, and which will, I understand, shortly appear in London. The portrait you see in the music shops is not like him now, but it may have been eight or ten years ago."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There were at that time several Webers. We have seen that Dionys Weber was the master of Moscheles. B. A. Weber had lately died, Gottfried Weber was a composer, and C. M. von Weber would only then have been regarded by a few adapts as Weber *par excellence*. Beethoven was, however, acquainted with the *Freischiitz*, and thought well of it. His answer quoted above must either have been given to evade an inconvenient question, or Stumpff misunderstood what was said.

<sup>2</sup> The "trio" must be the Variations, Op. 121, on a theme from Wenzel Müller's *Schwestern von Prag*, which did not

“I could tell you a great deal more about this extraordinary man, who, from all that I have seen of him, inspires me with the deepest reverence ; but I fear that I have already made too great demands on your time. His kind and hearty manner, and the way in which he said farewell, have made a deep impression on me. Adieu.”<sup>1</sup>

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appear till the next year (Steiner & Co.) The portrait would be the vigorously drawn head by Latronne, brought out by Artaria in Vienna, in 1814.

<sup>1</sup> Beethoven asked him for two copies of the large edition of Handel's works, one for himself, the other for Duke Rudolph. We shall see that the transmission of one of these copies, in 1826, brought Stumpff into yet closer contact with Beethoven during the last days of his life.







## CHAPTER XXX.

### BEETHOVEN'S CHARACTER AND MANNER OF LIFE.



THE following account appeared in the Stuttgart *Morgenblatt* in 1823. The writer was very well informed, and the article was shortly reprinted in the Vienna *Theaterzeitung*, when the master's attention was directed to it by his nephew. It is therefore well worth our notice—

“Ludwig van Beethoven is one of those who are honoured, not only by Vienna and Germany, but by Europe and the whole civilised world. Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn form an unapproached triumvirate in modern musical art. In spite of Italian ‘kling-klang,’ and modern charlatanism, the intellectual depth, unfailing originality, and the ideality of a great spirit command the homage of every true worshipper of the divine Polyhymnia. Let us, however, speak not of his works, but of himself.

“Beethoven's life has, as he says, been chiefly a

life of thought. The events of the outward world concern him but little; he is quite given up to art. Midnight finds him at his desk, and sunrise calls him to it again; his activity is unceasing. But he dislikes being asked to compose, for he wishes only to give forth the spontaneous fruits of his genius. Art is to him a divine gift, not a means for obtaining fame or money. Despising all that is false, he strives after truth and character in art and in life. The first time *Fidelio* was performed, the overture belonging to it could not be given, and another overture of Beethoven's was substituted. 'They clapped,' he said, 'but I was ashamed; it did not belong to the whole.'<sup>1</sup>

"He is incapable of deception. If he vouchsafes any opinion on a composition, it is sure to be a true one; and he immediately dissolves connections which he finds inimical to his upright manliness and lofty ideas of honour. He has a strong, decisive will, but he only desires what is right; and, what is rare in our times, he not only commits no injustice, but will suffer none. He shows a delicate respect for women, and his feelings towards them are of virgin purity.

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<sup>1</sup> The mention of this circumstance, which occurred in 1806, and which Treitschke, as we have seen referred to, renders it likely that in spite of the signature "S—I," I. von Seyfried, the bandmaster of the theatre, was the author of this sketch. Although not intimate with the master himself, he knew enough of his immediate surroundings to learn particulars about him; and he was a vivacious newspaper correspondent.

He is gentle towards his friends, all of whom have, in some way or other, experienced the kindliness of his disposition.

“He possesses a rich fund of humour, and he castigates anything he despises with pungent sarcasm. Verbal communication is, unfortunately, only possible on his side ; but art, science, and nature compensate him for the loss of society. He is a great admirer of Goethe, and recalls with pleasure the time he spent with him at Carlsbad (Teplitz). ‘I heard better then,’ he said in that gentle tone which, in his happy moments, is so impressive.

“He is particularly fond of out-of-door life ; even in the worst winter weather, he is not easily kept at home a whole day ; and when spending the summer in the country, he is generally out before sunrise in Nature’s blooming garden. No wonder, then, that his works are glorious like herself, and that, in the contemplation of them, we are drawn nearer to the spiritual world. He receives daily proofs from all parts of Europe, and even of America, of the recognition of his genius. He has been much troubled by the loss of all his letters<sup>1</sup> during his removal from the country to town, and which was occasioned either through the carelessness or faithlessness of the person entrusted with the transport of his goods. Being so absorbed in his art, he is frequently imposed upon.

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<sup>1</sup> We find no other reference to such a misfortune, and it is impossible that “all his letters” could have been lost.

“One evening when he was taking supper in a restaurant, an English naval captain, hearing the waiter mention his name, came up to him, and expressed the immense gratification which it gave him to see the man whose glorious symphonies he had listened to with pleasure even in the East Indies. The Englishman’s simple, unaffected tribute of respect gave him genuine pleasure ; but he dislikes merely curious visitors, for his time is very precious. His whole soul is bound up in his art, and in his nephew, Karl, to whom he is a father in the truest sense.

“Beethoven’s physique indicates intense strength, and his head recalls Ossian’s grey-haired bards of Ullin. The portrait of him in the shops is very good. He is quick in his movements, and hates slowness. His table is simply but well appointed, and he is particularly fond of game, which he considers most wholesome food. He takes wine with moderation, drinking generally only the red Austrian, as the Hungarian does not agree with him. In the winter, when he is in Vienna, he likes to look through the newspapers over a small cup of coffee in a coffee-house, to smoke a pipe, or to converse with his friends before taking his after-dinner walk. As he works far into the night, and rises very early, it often happens that he takes an hour’s nap after his walk. He finds it injurious to live in a house with a northerly aspect, or exposed to strong winds, for he is very subject to

rheumatism, to which he attributes his deafness. This last wet summer, which he spent at Hetzendorf, was therefore very bad for his health, and for two months he suffered intense pain in his eyes.<sup>1</sup>

"It is remarkable that, although deprived of the sense through means of which he works so powerfully on other minds, he can produce the softest *piano* when he sits down to his instrument, and abandon himself to his fancy. He receives a pension from the Austrian court, and although this by no means covers his expenses, he declined a tempting offer made to him at the time when the French made their ruler an emperor.<sup>2</sup>

"He has just finished a mass, which he is publishing by subscription. His Imperial Highness and Eminence the Archduke Rudolph and Louis XVIII. are among the subscribers. A symphony, some quartets, a Biblical oratorio, translated for him into English by the American consul from the United States, and an opera, the libretto written by Grillparzer, may be expected."

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<sup>1</sup> A few details require correcting: Beethoven preferred the Buda Gebirgs wine, because of a weakness in the stomach. In his later years, he only worked far on into the night when there was some pressing work to finish, as in this autumn of 1823, when the Ninth Symphony was being composed, his bad sight having greatly retarded his work in the summer.

<sup>2</sup> We know that the Imperial Court was only represented by the Archduke Rudolph, and that Kinsky and Lobkowitz were the chief contributors. The "tempting invitation" was from King Jerome at Cassel.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

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### *THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS.*



WE have found frequent allusion to an oratorio, which the Vienna Musik-verein commissioned Beethoven to write, but which, though partly paid for, was never finished. First of all, I. von Seyfried was to prepare the poem ; then Karl Bernard, *littérateur*, poet, and personal friend of Beethoven, was applied to, and after many years' work he produced a text which Beethoven, in writing, repeatedly expressed his readiness to compose. However, as we have said, this never came to pass; and since this must have been owing to some inherent obstacle, it is interesting to learn fuller particulars. A correspondent of the Stuttgart *Morgenblatt*, for February 26th, 1824, gives the following details—

“I mentioned, in my last article, an oratorio which Beethoven had in hand, and the work particularly attracts the attention of all true lovers of music, as scarcely anything is now being accomplished in this

highest form of musical poetry. Important institutions, like the Conservatoire and the large Musikverein in this place, are always in the end obliged to have recourse to Haydn's masterpieces ; although for these even the taste at length becomes blunted. Handel's sublime and intellectual tone-poems demand an extraordinarily large orchestra, and no longer correspond to the taste of the age. It is a primary necessity that the composer be inspired with enthusiasm by the poetry. This is, undoubtedly, the case with Beethoven ; and I am now able to say more about the text he has selected, as it accidentally came into my hands. It is, in my opinion, worthy of public attention.

"The oratorio, which is in two parts, is entitled *The Triumph of the Cross*. The text is by Karl Bernard, editor of the Vienna *Hofzeitung*, to whose musical dramas, *Faust* and *Libussa*, we owe the excellent operas by Spohr and Conradin Kreutzer. The subject is that supreme moment in the history of Constantine and of Rome, when the sight of a shining cross in the heavens, with the inscription *In hoc signo vinces*, impelled the Emperor to destroy the false gods, to take up arms against his adversary, the co-Emperor Maxentius, and to plant the banner of the cross on the seven hills.

"By an ingenious blending of poetry and history, and the life-like nature of the *dramatis personæ*, the action has received the character of a sacred drama,



taking place in a romantic region. The whole bears the stamp of simple dignity. The allegorical personages, Faith, Charity and Hope, united in harmonious mutual action with the historical characters, Constantine, Maxentius and Julia ; the choruses of Christians, heathens, warriors, augurs, magicians, angels, martyrs, and demons, form an imposing mass for the tone-poem. I give, as an example, the first half of the seventh scene of the first part —

*Chor der Engel.*

Gott dem Einigen,  
Dem Alleinigen !  
Der war, der ist, der sein wird,  
Ihm allein, ihm allein,  
Sei Preis und Ehre,  
In Ewigkeit !  
Es ist der Herrscher der Heere Herr,  
Er gibt den Muth, er gibt die Kraft,  
Sein ist der Sieg, der Ruhm, die Macht !  
Ihm Preis und Ehre,  
Ihm allein, ihm allein  
In Ewigkeit !

*Constantin.*

Umflüstert mich des Himmels Odem ?  
Vernehm' ich Stimmen in den Lüften ?  
Sind aufgethan des Himmels Höhen ?  
Was bebt mein Herz in heil'gen Schauern ?

*Julia.*

Bin ein Spiel ich wacher Träume ?  
Welcher Stimmen Wunderlaute  
Hör' ich tönen in den Lüften ?  
Welch' ein Glanz erfüllt die Höhen ?

*Maxentius und der Chor der Heiden.*

Ist es Trug verwirrter Sinne?  
Tönen Stimmen in den Lüften?  
Will der Himmel sich entzünden?  
Was erfüllt mein Herz mit Grauen?

*Hass und Zwietracht.*

Dass ist der Hohen  
Furchtbaren Stimme,  
Die unserm Werke  
Verderbend nah'n!

*Chor dee Heiden.*

Im Feiergewande,  
Mit Lobesgesängen,  
Verkünden die Himme  
Des ewigen Nahen;  
Demüthig im Staube  
Anbete der Staub!

*Glaube, Hoffnung, Liebe.*

Wer Gott vertraut, der darf nicht zagen,  
Wenn seiner Boten Stimme schallt,  
Darf muthig auf die Blicke Schlagen,  
Wenn sie auch stark, wie Donner hallt!

*Chor der Engel.*

Lobsinget ihr Himmel,  
Bet' an, o Erde!  
Wunderbar, herrlich,  
Heilig ist Gott!

*Einzelne Stimmen.*

Sein Blick ist Gnade,  
Sein Wort Erbarmen  
Segen sein Name,  
Liebe sein Thun!—  
Ich ward des Kreuzes  
Unschuld'g Opfer  
Ewige Sühne

Sündiger Schuld !—  
Das Kreuz nun strahlet  
Ein Siegeszeichen  
Ueber die Hölle  
Ueber den Tod !

*Mehrere Stimmen.*

In dieses Zeichens  
Heiligem Namen,  
Sieget der fromme,  
Gläubige Muth !—

*Chor.*

Lobsinget ihr Himmel  
Bet' an, 'o Erde !  
Wunderbar herrlich,  
Heilig ist Gott !—

*Chor der Geister.*

Heilig, heilig, heilig ist Gott !

“The verses are harmonious and musical ; they afford ample material for the fancy of the composer.”

So says this writer, but Beethoven thought otherwise. Faith, hope, and charity—graces that so richly adorned his own character—did not seem to him embodied in this poem ; and this is the reason why, despite his promises, he could not prevail upon himself to undertake the uncongenial task, but quietly “went on in his own way,” which was the composition of his last quartets.



## CHAPTER XXXII.

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### *THE ORGANIST, FREUDENBERG.*



R. VIOL compiled a little book, in 1869, called *Aus dem Leben eines alten Organisten*, from papers left by K. Gottlieb Freudenberg. The chapter entitled "Beethoven" requires no introduction, as it explains itself; we have only to remark that the date 1825 is not correct, for in that year neither the Italian Opera nor the large theatre were open in Vienna. In the July of 1823, Beethoven was not at Baden, so the year must be 1824; and this exactly corresponds with the facts, as may be seen from comparing the same period in "Beethoven's Life." Dr. Viol, who could have thrown light on other parts of the narrative, is now dead. His account runs thus—

"In June, 1825, I set out, with 150 thalers in my pocket, on a journey to Vienna by way of Neisse, Ratisbon, and Olmütz, having as a companion Drescher, a *studios, judis per journalière*, who was well up in historical studies, including the elements

of art history. My long legs rendered me an active pedestrian, and for the sake of economy and golden independence, I should unhesitatingly have undertaken the journey *per pedes*, had not the urgent persuasion of my companion induced me to ride. On account of the prying spirit of demagogism then abroad, I was obliged to cut my long fair curls, and exchange my German coat for a wretched French *habit*, to avoid exposing myself to the wiles of the police. But I could not conform to the change, and remained faithful to my simple easy dress, on the principle that the fewer the requirements the greater the contentment of man. Full of spirits and eager for travel, I set off, carrying only a little knapsack containing a few necessaries ; and this was fortunate, for had I taken more, I should have been weighed down by the base burden of luggage, and crushed to powder before the end of the journey.

“Arrived in Vienna, I abandoned myself to the first impressions of the large, populous, gay and agreeable “Kaiserstadt.” Among the many attractive sights, the churches were naturally to me one of the greatest interest. I found in most of them bad organs, with short octave pedals ; St. Stephen’s even, with its many coloured windows, casting a dim, mysterious light, has not an organ which can bear the least comparison with the fine instruments in the Breslau churches. Neither was the music satisfactory ; that in the metropolitan churches was not devout or

even imperial, but very common-place. Yes, yes, dear good, old Schnabel, you have spoilt me with your simple, pious, edifying masses, and your wonderful talent of always saying the right thing! I had expected the church music in Vienna to be as good as, if not better than, that in Breslau; but the further one goes towards the frivolous south, the more trifling and sensuous becomes the sublime music of the church. No wonder that the superficial Italian operatic music, and Rossini's sparkling fireworks have had an injurious influence on the good, thoughtful German music of the church even. I was very much entertained by the amusing comedies at the Leopoldstadt and Josephstadt theatres. Do we not all know Ignaz Schuster, Wenzel Müller, and Raymund, those killers of melancholy, those magicians who conjure up such gay images of Viennese life, enlivened with local witticism! At the Hofburg Theatre I saw an excellent performance of Italian Opera, with Lablache, Fodor, Ungher, and other artists.

"I envied Holtei his membership in the "*Ludlams-hohle*," a society of writers, poets, composers, and artists, in which intellect presides and Philistine stupidity dare not show its face twice. There are great hearts among the little band; and humour, wit, fancy, and sarcasm scatter their glowing, scorching sparks. We had a miniature of this club at Breslau, in that aimless assembly consisting of painters, poets, and singers, who, however, did occasionally flourish the

whip of satire. The so-called "Bären-höle," in which players, not pigs,<sup>1</sup> were privileged to carry on their wild doings, was a similar society. Among the musical grandees of Vienna, I had eyes and ears for one alone. Attention! present arms! The Emperor is coming! Francis, or Joseph? No; Beethoven, the musician.

"The diffuser of sunshine, the harbinger of light and joy, he who rejoices with the joyful and mourns with the sorrowful; he it is whose music, like a kiss of peace, unites millions of hearts; he who is crowned by the grace of God, and anointed with the holiest consecrating oil of art! I could not pay my vows to Beethoven in Vienna, for the Emperor of music had already taken up his summer residence at Baden. 'Dahin, dahin, muss ich, Geliebter, ziehen; ohne Rast und Ruh dem Helenenthal zu' (There, there, my love, must I fly, to the Helenen valley, without rest or stay). The leather knapsack was buckled on; *per pedes apostolorum*, or rather *cantorum*, the German youth approached his goal. Baden was soon reached; the nearer I came to this quasi Viennese suburb, the louder and faster my heart beat with fear and hope.

"To fit myself for the great visit, I took a bath in the first-class rooms, where, in a somewhat loose fashion, ladies and gentlemen, attired in light cos-

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<sup>1</sup> In the original there is a play on the words *schau*, from the verb to see, and *sau*, a pig or boar: "Schau-spielernicht, sau-spieler,"—TRANSLATOR,



tumes, all bathe together. Being a stranger, the attendant only gave me a very thin, short, scanty garment, which, like swimming-drawers, was only slightly fastened by a small band. When I stepped into the bath, the water lifted up my thin covering, and the elegant, gaily chattering company looked at me in mute amazement; this embarrassed me, and in my confusion I must have undone the band. The giggling, laughing, and staring made me colour with shame; but I only perceived the cause of the general amusement when a gentleman said to me, 'Monsieur, nous ne sommes pas ici au paradis, regardez en bas.' The evil was soon rectified; and several gentlemen, to whom I must have appeared as an obtrusive, ill-bred man, addressed me in French, which was often used at that time as a test of gentility. Although I could have answered in that language, I preferred to reply to these inquisitive people in Italian, which caused them to retire in shame and confusion. Presently a somewhat substantial nymph commenced a conversation with me in Italian, and this evidence of good-breeding on my part at once gave me a position in this aristocratic circle. Everybody grew complaisant, for I was considered *comme il faut*. My inquiry about the best time for seeing Beethoven, and my proposed journey to Rome and Naples surrounded me with a sort of halo, and I afterwards discovered that I had been taken for a rich Englishman. O, *sancta simplicitas*, O benighted blindness, the poor music teacher a rich Englishman!

“Beethoven had comfortably established himself in the St. Helenenthal, that quiet, romantic, enchanting region, traversed by lonely wood and mountain paths, where, far from man and nearer to God, you can commune with your inmost soul, undisturbed by the tumult of the world. I was approaching Beethoven’s house with rapid steps about two o’clock in the afternoon of a hot July day. Beethoven, who had observed me from the balcony, retreated when I drew near, anticipating, perhaps, a visit from one of the numerous travelling tribes of so-called musical geniuses, who pester him during the summer, like flies tormenting a noble steed. At the first sight of my strange student’s costume and dishevelled appearance, the old housekeeper would not admit me. On my saying, ‘I wish to see Beethoven,’ she replied quite angrily, with her arms a-kimbo, ‘What, a tramp like you wanting to speak with my good master, Beethoven? Everybody might come at that rate. Barons, counts, and even princes are often refused admittance. They send a complimentary message, and that’s all!’ ‘But dear, sweet mistress, I am a poor musician, I have walked all the way from Breslau in Silesia, and I shall have no rest day or night till I have seen my idol. I am like old Simeon, who longed to see the child, Christ, before he died, and exclaimed, when his desire was fulfilled, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”’ ‘Well, sir, I think

you are not so bad as you look, and I can respect you ; such a long journey on foot, it must have been twenty or thirty miles ! ’ ‘ No, my dear little mother, nearly a hundred ! ’ ‘ Oh, good heavens, Jesus Maria, it would indeed be hard hearted of my good master to send you away, without letting you see him ! ’

“ She quickly trotted off to announce me, and returned with a sheet of parchment and a pencil. On my asking what these were for, she said, ‘ Why, you know that Beethoven is quite deaf, and his visitors must write down all they have to say. ’ I was not aware that Beethoven was so deaf as this. How should I introduce myself ? I wrote, ‘ Freudenberg, music teacher, from Breslau, desires to make the acquaintance of the great and gifted Beethoven. ’ Presently a thick-set figure of middle height appeared, and with friendly gestures and kind looks drew me into his room, where I was given a seat on the sofa, and had an hour’s pleasant talk over a cup of black coffee.

“ It will readily be understood, although words may fail me to express it, that this hour was to me one of the utmost sanctity, deepest artistic devotion, and sincerest happiness. The subject of our conversation was, of course, musical art and its votaries. I expected Beethoven to despise Rossini, who was at that time so idolized ; but, on the contrary, he admitted that Rossini was a man of talent, a very melodious composer, that his music was adapted to

the frivolous, seusuous spirit of the times, and that such was his productiveness that he composed an opera in as many weeks as a German did years. There was, he said, a great deal of good in Spontini ; he was a splendid master of theatrical effects and musical war cries. Spohr indulged very freely in dissonances, and his chromatic melody interfered with the pleasing character of his music. Beethoven has great reverence for Sebastian Bach, who, from his endless, inexhaustible wealth of combinations and harmonies, should be called Meer, not Bach.<sup>1</sup> Bach was the *beau ideal* of organists. ‘In my youth,’ said Beethoven, ‘I used to play the organ a great deal, but my nerves could not stand the power of that gigantic instrument ; an organist who is master of his instrument I place foremost among *virtuosi*.’ Beethoven spoke a great deal against the Viennese organists ; the appointments, he said, were made by favour, or according to old-established usages. The man who had served longest received such an office, and so the most wretched players got promotion. He complained of the organs with defective pedals, and concluded by censuring the great and rich, who do nothing for goodness and art because they understand them not.

“To my inquiries about many of his works, why, for instance, *Fidelio* did not receive universal appro-

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<sup>1</sup> *Meer* means sea ; *Bach*, brook.—TRANSLATOR.

bation, he replied, 'We Germans have no sufficiently cultivated singers for the part of Leonora; they are too cold and feelingless. The Italians sing and act with their whole souls.' Beethoven made a great many pertinent remarks about church music: church music should be performed by voices alone, except for a gloria or a piece of that kind. For this reason he preferred *Palestrina*, but it would be folly to imitate his form without possessing his spirit and religious feeling; besides, it would be impossible for the singers of the present day to sing his long-sustained notes with purity. He gave no opinion about Allegri's celebrated *Miserere*, not having heard it; many have been enraptured by it, many also have remained cold. He regarded those composers as models who unite nature with art.

"He did not accede to my repeated request that he would play something on the piano; he said he was too weak and poorly to be able to satisfy me, although I had assured him that I only cared about his ideas, not his manipulative dexterity. I saw by his countenance and his absent-minded manner that he was living in his own sublime tone-world, and he gave me to understand by pantomime that I must not rob him any longer of his precious time.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise he was kind and gentle; once, however, he looked exceedingly wrathful, when I spoke of his

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<sup>1</sup> He was then working at the first three of the last quartets.

last symphonies as strange. He said, by his looks, 'What does a blockhead like you, and what do the rest of the wiseacres, who find fault with my works, know about them? You have not the energy, the bold wing of the eagle to be able to follow me.' To unintelligent critics, or bouquet-making dilettanti, Beethoven may well have been at that time the *x* unknown. This great Beethoven, in person rather small, with a wild, distracted appearance, and grey, shaggy hair, stood defiantly aloft, dismissing me with the words, 'Remember me to my old acquaintance, Joseph Schnabel.' "





## CHAPTER XXXIII.

*LUDWIG RELLSTAB.*



HE sketch by Rellstab has already been referred to in Zelter's letters. Since that time, the relations between Zelter and his great "brother artist" had grown more intimate; and the latter had written a very respectful letter, asking him to subscribe to his Grand Mass. Zelter's appreciation of this work shows the complete conquest which Beethoven had made of the old master mason. It was, however, his desire of assisting his young friend in following some fixed pursuit which led him to address Beethoven in such reverential terms, rather than a firm conviction of the immeasurable superiority of his genius to the rest of his contemporaries in the art world. But this reverential tone served to raise the young poet's opinion of the great musician; and, although he was then, as always, far from thoroughly understanding Beethoven, he at any rate acquired a clear idea of the human side of his nature, and of his troubled and



even tragic existence, which he has depicted with a faithfulness "surpassing art." From his own reminiscences, he was enabled to give a clear picture of the master in his various writings ("Garten in Wald," 1854; "Aus Meinem Leben," 1861), the chief materials for which were gathered from letters and journals written at the time. He says—

"I had decided to go to Vienna. With what hope, pleasurable confidence, and wholesome joy does a youth, who has just experienced the gratification of finding his first literary efforts favourably received by a small circle, set out on such an expedition! What, then, are the past and the far-off future in comparison to the present? To my enthusiastic spirit, the supreme attraction of the imperial city was Beethoven! The mere sight of the man I adored would have satisfied a long-felt wish; but my dreams, or rather my castles in the air, had been far more ambitious. I cherished a weak glimmering hope that he would compose an opera to a text written by me. Unattainable and incredible as this seemed, I would not relinquish the 'Magna voluisse,' and therefore took steps necessary for the introduction of the project. I did not feel altogether unjustified in the attempt, as very eminent men had taken a practical interest in my poems of this kind. Bernhard Klein had composed one opera which I had written, and a second was in progress. Some years previously Maria von Weber, judging of my powers by what I had already accomplished, and the views

on the nature of dramatic poetry which I had expressed in conversation, had seriously contemplated a similar undertaking, and had corresponded with me about it. Finally, Ludwig Berger, whom, although he has not yet received general recognition, I consider in creative power foremost of these three, selected me from a crowd of young poets to write his opera. The project, like most of the plans of this talented man, who was a prey to hypochondriacal irresolution, was unhappily never carried out.

"Such were my credentials. Not that I was vain enough to place myself for a moment on the same level with Beethoven, but I felt capable of taking my place with those amongst whom his choice must lie.

"But how was I to win his friendship? Conversation was excessively difficult, suffering as he did from the severest misfortune fate could inflict. Write to him first? What a host of foolish letters he must receive! Besides, reading was not the musician's *métier*, and was not at all in Beethoven's line! An influential name was what I wanted. Zelter, both on account of his fame as a theorist, and of his former acquaintance with Beethoven, was the only musician in Berlin who could give me a letter of introduction to the great master. And I must here discharge a sacred debt of gratitude to Zelter for having extricated me from my difficulties, although in after years I was, from my position as a critic and in the interests of truth and justice, often obliged to oppose him, on

account of his frequently unjustifiable conduct, and his intellectual musical absolutism. Not the fact of his having given me a letter to Beethoven, but his manner of doing so renders gratitude and even reverence a duty.

“For he wrote it as if to a saint in heaven. He who often talked as if he had but little respect for the great men of art, Mozart, Haydn or Beethoven, and treated them just like the rest of the world; when it became a matter of doing, assumed what I can only call the position of a worshipper, not from any affected sentiment or appearance of sanctity, but from true love of art, and because he felt he was speaking to a high priest—his humility was true greatness of soul.

“His originality, exhibited in so many brilliant instances, was visible even in the direction of this letter. For he did not write as everyone else would have done, Herr Ludwig van Beethoven; but, ‘An den edlen, berühmten, grossen Ludwig van Beethoven’ (To the noble, celebrated, great Ludwig van Beethoven). It is unpardonable, on my part, not to have made a copy of the letter, which I afterwards read at Beethoven’s house; for its four or five lines were a real gem of art work, produced by the fervour of ardent admiration. No insipid flattery or unpleasant subserviency (such as was often displayed in letters to Goethe); but only noble, large-hearted, yet faithful, simple German words of enthusiastic friendship, concluding with a clear and warm recommendation of my heart’s desire.

“This letter was well worthy of preservation. It would have shone as a jewel in the mass of correspondence between Goethe and Zelter! It would, by its brilliancy, have overshadowed the dark passages, viz., those that should have remained in the dark.<sup>1</sup>

“Enough, I was in possession of the letter—at least of the direction—which came so hot from the heart, that I looked at it with ever fresh astonishment and emotion. We started on our journey on Jean Paul’s birthday, March 21st, 1825, the day of the equinox, when the sun resumes its beneficent office. (I never had so many important fête days in one year before.) The ground was still covered with snow, the wind icy cold! Yet how invigorating to the youthful spirit to flit across the bare fields, and past the grey villages through the rough wintry breeze.

“My travelling companion, overwhelmed by a mass of business, had arranged to spend two days at an hotel in Dresden, where he could work undisturbed. Left entirely to myself, I had ample leisure to enjoy the natural beauties of the handsome city, which, even in winter and early spring, were numerous and charming. But I will pass over everything else, and only mention musical matters. I had written to Maria von Weber a fortnight before, requesting him, if possible, to favour us during our visit with a performance of

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<sup>1</sup> This letter has never been found.

*Euryanthe*, which hitherto had been given nowhere but in Vienna, Spontini having used all his energies to prevent a representation of it in Berlin, from a genuine conviction that the work was not worthy of publicity! Weber responded to my request by enclosing a card, which he had received a few days before, announcing the confinement of Schröder-Devrient (the *Euryanthe* of Dresden.) This fortunate and unfortunate event brought the opera project to a standstill.

“It had, however, the advantage for me of rendering Weber less busy, so that I saw more of him in those two days than I had ever hoped to. He was preparing to go to England, and to compose *Oberon*. This gave us a great deal to talk about; but I did not neglect the opportunity of seeking his help in my own affair. When I asked him for a letter, he said, ‘Beethoven does not like letters, reading and writing are a burden to him; but give him my warmest and most respectful regards. From the manner in which he received me when I was in Vienna, some years ago, I may venture to suppose that he still thinks kindly of me.’ Weber then gave me a description of his last visit to Beethoven, to which, of course, I listened with the most eager attention. ‘We had,’ he said, ‘visited him several times, but he had never spoken a word; he was unwell, shy of society, and melancholy. At length, however, fortune favoured us. We called one day

and found him at his writing table. He did not rise to greet us, but being old acquaintances, we soon got into friendly conversation. Then he suddenly came close up to me, laid both hands on my shoulders, gave me a hearty shake, exclaiming, "You are a good fellow," and kissed me warmly and affectionately. Amid all the approbation and honour which fell to my share in Vienna, I prized nothing so much as this brotherly kiss from Beethoven.'

"Such words as these, from so celebrated a man as Weber, of course increased my veneration for Beethoven, and added to the anxiety with which I anticipated the moment of meeting him. Glowing with the thought of what was before me, I bade farewell to Weber, and the next day we left Dresden in the most brilliant sunshine.

"The indescribable delights of anticipation which I then enjoyed can only be understood by enthusiastic young hearts, who have had the inestimable pleasure of approaching the magic circle which surrounds an immortal genius! But that is, I grieve to say, a pleasure of the past, for what a gulf lies between highly meritorious and famous men (of whom we have many) and a real genius.<sup>1</sup>

"We reached Iglau late in the evening; the next day we should be within sight of Vienna. I shall never forget my feelings on first beholding the grey,

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<sup>1</sup> The description of the journey is here superfluous.

gigantic tower of St. Stephen, rising boldly against the horizon from behind the mountain, around which our road wound, and which still concealed the city. The tower seemed to say to us, 'Traveller, here lies Vienna!' And what did these words signify? To me they bore only the echo of a great name—'Beethoven,' which I uttered with enthusiasm, despite the smiles and deprecatory gestures of my companion. To me this name is worth more than all the monuments, institutions, artistic and scientific, and all the great men of this imperial city. And were the choice offered me, I would gladly give up all for him, who perhaps lives alone in some dismal back street, shunned as a gloomy oddity by the glittering, giddy, pleasure-loving world, but surrounded by lofty spirits and the marvels of his own creation.

"When we arrived in Vienna, anxiously eager as I was to see Beethoven, I thought it desirable to inform myself first as to the best means of so doing. Setting such store as I did on this visit, I, of course, spoke of it to a great many people in Vienna, from whom I gathered that an introduction to Beethoven, as to Goethe, was attended by all kinds of difficulties. I therefore sought out those persons whom I knew were or had been in connection with Beethoven, among them Grillparzer, who advised me to go to him in a straightforward manner.

"'If you should happen to go at an unfavourable time,' said one of his friends, 'he would not admit



you, if you were the Emperor. Preparations are of no avail ; sincerity, straightforwardness, and independence are to him the best recommendations. Do not be discouraged by a gruff reception ; go to him a second time, and you will perhaps be doubly recompensed for your first rebuff.' I therefore resolved one morning to wend my way to No. 767, in the Kruger Strasse, where Beethoven lived on the fourth story.

"This is not at all an out-of-the-way place, but only one of the less noisy side streets which intersect the busy main thoroughfares of the heart of the city, and such a residence as an artist obliged to live in the city would very naturally choose. The fourth floor must not be regarded as a sign of poverty. Six, seven, or even eight, storeys are so common in Vienna that the middle class rarely live lower than the fourth.

"When I had mounted the flight of stone steps, I found a bell on my left with a half-erased name, which I made out as Beethoven. I rang ; footsteps were heard approaching, and the door opened, but so great was my agitation that I really do not know whether by a girl or by Beethoven's nephew, who was then living with him, and whom I afterwards saw several times.<sup>1</sup> Intense excitement prevented my paying any attention to outward matters. All I remember is that I could not get out the words,

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<sup>1</sup> His nephew was not living with him then, but always came in to meals.

‘Does Herr Beethoven live here?’ How does the gigantic importance of such a name overwhelm the pigmy laws and limits of commonplace conventionality!

“However, even here, these forms would not yield their trivial rights, and I was announced. I delivered Zelter’s letter as my passport, and waited expectantly in the ante-room. I can still see this apartment, with its dreary mixture of emptiness and disorder. There were a number of empty bottles on the floor; on a bare table some plates, and two glasses, one of them half full. Had Beethoven left this half-glass? I felt a desire to drink the remainder, and thus enter, as it were by stealth, into what is by German custom the uniting bond of brotherhood.

“The door of the next room opened, and I was requested to enter. My heart beat audibly, as I timidly crossed the threshold! This was not my first time of approaching one so immeasurably above me; I need only instance Goethe and Jean Paul. But with neither of these had I the same kind of feeling. I will not presume to say that an ‘anch’io son’ pittore’ made my access to them freer, and afforded a more ready medium for spiritual communication; but I at least belonged to the same kingdom wherein they ruled, spoke the same language, and had more claim to a response; finally, there were in the domain of poetic thought more connecting links between us, to say nothing of the sad and almost unsurmountable

obstacle which Beethoven's deafness presented to all near approaches of warm sympathy ! And yet that diversity of pursuits which at first sight seemed to separate, in part drew us nearer to each other. Perhaps nothing would have been more distasteful, or even more intolerable, to Beethoven than a mediocre musician ; but a poet of meagre talents could offer him something which he had not, and which he could both appreciate and enjoy. <sup>1</sup>

“ I anxiously entered, and beheld Beethoven ! He was sitting in a negligent attitude on an untidy bed, which stood against the innermost wall, and from which he appeared to have just risen. He was holding Zelter's letter in one hand ; the other he stretched out to me with such an expression of kindness and pain, that all feeling of constraint vanished, and I freely poured forth all the love and reverence I felt for him. He got up, pressed my hand with German warmth, and said, ‘ You have brought me a delightful letter from Zelter ! He is a noble upholder of pure art ! ’ Accustomed to do the talking himself, as he can only hear with difficulty, he con-

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<sup>1</sup> In the following description of the sufferings of the great man, we must keep in mind, not only the dangerous internal complaint which had recently attacked him, and his deafness, but above all the care and grief caused by the wild behaviour of the young man whom he so entirely regarded as a son, and on whom he had bestowed all his affection. But this affection had been excessive ; and the consciousness that he was partly to blame for his own weakness increased his misery a hundredfold.

tinued, 'I am not very well, I have been ill ; you will find it troublesome to talk to me, for my hearing is very bad.'

"What I said, or whether I said anything, I really do not know ! By looks and by repeated pressures of his hand, I indicated what words would perhaps have failed to express, could I have spoken to him as to others.

"Beethoven asked me to be seated ; he himself took a chair in front of the bed, and drew it up to a table close at hand that was quite covered with treasures, notes in Beethoven's handwriting, and the works he was engaged on. I took a chair beside his, and rapidly cast another glance round the room. It was as large as the ante-room, and had two windows, between which stood a grand piano. This piece of furniture was the only sign of luxury, or even of comfort. A writing desk, some chairs and a table, white walls with old dusty draperies—such was Beethoven's room. What does he care about bronzes, mirrors, divans, gold and silver ! He to whom all the glory of this world is as dust and ashes compared to a divine iridescent spark of his genius !

"Thus I sat beside the sick, dejected sufferer. His dishevelled hair, which was nearly grey, and neither smooth, curly, nor straight, but a mixture of all three, was brushed straight up above his forehead. His features were not at first sight striking ; his face was

much smaller than I had imagined from his portraits, which represented him with a powerfully intellectual but severe countenance. There was nothing visible of that roughness and stormy independence which has been ascribed to his physiognomy to make it accord with his works. But why should Beethoven's face look like his scores? His complexion was brownish, not the healthy brown of the huntsman, but a yellow, sickly shade. The nose small and sharp, the mouth kind, the eyes small, pale grey, but speaking. Melancholy, suffering, and goodness were to be read in his countenance; but there was, I repeat, not even a passing trace of the power, boldness, and inflexibility characteristic of his genius. I have no wish to deceive the reader by a poetical description, but only desire to give a faithful picture of his beloved form. Despite all that has been said, he had no lack of that secret attractive power which the outward appearance of great men so irresistibly exercises. The dull heavy pain discernible in Beethoven's countenance was the result, not of temporary indisposition—for I saw the same expression weeks after when he was feeling much better, indeed, it never left his face—but of his whole life's story, which was a union of the greatest blessings with the bitterest deprivations. Until a Raphael be struck with blindness in the full freshness of his powers, Beethoven is without a compeer in the history of all ages, either in misery or in bliss. For, in the case of such men, the history of art becomes the history of the world.

"The sad, silent sorrow visible on his melancholy brow, and in his mild eyes, touched me indescribably; and it was only by a strong exercise of self-control that I restrained my tears while in his presence.

"When we were seated, Beethoven, handed me a tablet and pencil, saying, 'You need only write the chief points; I can find out the rest, for I have been accustomed to this for years.'

"As he was looking inquiringly towards me, I took the tablet and began to write these words, 'I asked Zelter to say that I desired to write an opera for you.'<sup>1</sup>

"Beethoven looked over me, and quickly divining what was meant, said, before I had half finished, 'So Zelter stated in his letter.'

"Then he handed me the letter.

"I read it for the first time, and in the presence of him to whom it was written. I was doubly impressed by its lofty and appropriate language, concise style, and profound reverence.

"The letter seemed to have made a deep impression upon Beethoven also, as I saw by the manner in which he received me. He repeated what he said when he first greeted me.

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<sup>1</sup> Rellstab himself observes that, of course, this conversation is not to be regarded as verbally accurate; but that "after a lapse of twenty years he still retained a most lively recollection of all that passed," to which I add that Beethoven's "Conversations" are not inconsistent with Rellstab's narration.

“‘This is a delightful letter! Zelter is a noble upholder of true art! Give him my kindest regards when you return! I should be very pleased,’ he continued, ‘if you would write an opera for me! It is so difficult to find a good libretto! Grillparzer has written one for me, but we have not been able yet to come to an understanding about it. Our ideas do not at all accord. You will have a great deal of trouble with me.’

“I tried to indicate by gestures that, for the sake of pleasing him, nothing would be too much trouble. He nodded kindly, as a sign that he understood me.

“I took up the tablet again, and was going to write, ‘What kind of poetry do you like best?’ But at the word ‘kind,’ Beethoven replied, ‘I care little about the style, if the subject pleases me. But I must be able to go into it heart and soul. I could not have composed such operas as *Don Juan* and *Figaro*. The subjects seem to me too frivolous, and I feel an antipathy to them.’

“He looked as if he would have said, ‘I am too unhappy, and my life is shadowed by too dark a cloud for me to enter into such trifling enjoyments.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> His own bitter experience of the wildness of his nephew, and of the immorality of his other near relatives, would inevitably give him a dread of subjects full of wanton sensualism. No disparagement of Mozart and his art was intended. By his purity and ideality, Mozart removed the earthly element from these subjects. Rellstab's ethical remarks on Mozart and Beethoven may, therefore, be omitted.



“A new world of thought dawned upon me with such vividness that I felt a ready response rising to my lips. But I waited for him to say more about Mozart. How precious would have been Beethoven’s voluntary and spontaneous utterances! How infinitely superior to an opinion obtained by asking.

“But he was silent, and seemed to expect me to say something.

“It was very embarrassing to give in written aphorisms what it would have been no easy task to have expressed in conversation. However, a practical solution of the difficulty suggested itself. I wrote, ‘I will mention some subjects.’

“Beethoven nodded assent.

“I was prepared for the occasion, having, when selecting something for Weber, collected a quantity of materials—historical, ancient, mythological, and romantic; so I wrote down the titles, such as Attila (I was thinking of his terrible wedding night, and the connection with the events in the *Nibelungenlied*), Antigone, Belisar, Orestes, and several others which occurred to me.

“Beethoven read the names, shook his head thoughtfully over each one, murmured something, and asked me to write some more.

“When this had gone on a few minutes, he repeated what he said before, ‘I am giving you a great deal of trouble! You will find me difficult to get on with.’

“ I was burning to expatiate on one or other of the subjects, to improvise a kind of scenarium as I had done for Weber, and to excite Beethoven's interest by a description of the chief characters and the principal scenes, but his severe affliction rendered this impossible. How deeply did I then realise his calamity ! From what springs of life—the direct communion of spirit with spirit and heart with heart—was he cut off ! What a terrible isolation ! And yet, how insignificant is that outward sense of which he is so deprived, compared to that inward one which is so peculiarly his own !

“ The struggle in my mind did not seem to escape his observation ; but, whether he was wearied, or because similar circumstances were of daily occurrence, and he felt a repugnance to repeating the same thing hundreds of times, he was silent.

“ I took the pencil and wrote, ‘ I will give you some specimens of my poems.’

“ A gleam of pleasure passed over his countenance, he nodded, and stretched out his hand ; we stood up.

“ I saw that he was exhausted, so took up my hat.

“ He did not discourage my intention of going, but said, although in a kindly, open-hearted manner, ‘ I am so unwell to-day, so tired and worn out ! But you must come again very soon.’

“ He gave me his hand on parting, responding to the warm, hearty pressure of mine, and I went. With what feelings !—heartfelt rejoicing over my good

fortune, and a sense of melancholy I had never before experienced ! An outburst of energy, and pressing call to action ; a sense of creative power to which nothing seemed impossible or unattainable ; and yet the vivid realization of this hope changed into a vain dream—as vain as it afterwards proved !

“ Thus ended my first visit to Beethoven. I was prepared for the results, as I had with me copies of my operatic librettos, and of what I considered the best of my lyric poems, scarcely anything of mine having as yet appeared in print. Being told by friends who knew him well that he disliked having to read much, that he would be a long time setting about it, and that from his disorderly habit, especially with regard to his papers, things could easily get into such a state of confusion that a book or a pamphlet might disappear for a twelvemonth ; moved by all these considerations, I did not send him copies of the opera libretti, but chose eight or ten of the lyrics, and wrote each out neatly on a separate piece of paper. For these, a glance was sufficient ; the leaves might be scattered about his room among hundreds of others ; if he mislaid one, the rest remained, and the loss could be replaced in a moment. The poems depicted various moods ; one, perhaps, would accord with his own, and awaken the desire to utter his passing feelings in immortal strains ! And would not another song by Beethoven be a rich result of my journey to Vienna ? If every similar cause had always produced a similar

effect, how many more beautiful songs we should possess !<sup>1</sup>

“ So I carefully packed up my poems, accompanied them with a little note, and carried the packet to his house myself, not caring to trust so important a matter to any other hand.

“ I thought I ought to allow a few days to elapse before paying a second visit ; and much as I longed to see Beethoven again, a young man full of spirits could, of course, find sufficient enjoyment and diversion in the magnificent foreign city to cause the time to pass rapidly. At length, I stood once more before the sacred portals. I rang, and the door opened, but I was met by the announcement, ‘ The master is too ill to see anyone.’

“ Such a chance had never occurred to me ! I stood aghast, and must confess that the selfishness with which man is, alas, born, played me a very ugly trick. Care and anxiety about so invaluable a life would have been the most natural feeling ; but, to be honest with myself, I only thought of my own disappointed hopes. Gloomily and slowly I descended the eighty or ninety stone steps. In the street I met a friend who had seen me coming out of Beethoven’s

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<sup>1</sup> Schindler afterwards restored these little poems to Rellstab. Some of them bore pencil marks in Beethoven’s handwriting. Feeling too unwell to do anything himself, Beethoven gave them to Schubert, who set them to music. They form the seven songs in the *Schwanengesang*.

door. He called out to me from a distance, 'You have been to Beethoven—did you see him?' I related what had happened. He said, 'I can offer you some consolation. One of Beethoven's last quartets is still in manuscript; and, although it has been bought by Steiner (proprietor of the establishment now belonging to Haslinger), is to be performed this evening. The admission is by payment, but it is to include only a small, select circle of musical connoisseurs. I will call for you, and take you there.' I accepted the offer with pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

"About seven in the evening we betook ourselves to a house in the Quarter am Graben, where, in what may be called a large hall, rather than a private drawing-room, we found a considerable audience already assembled, among whom I recognized some of the leading musicians in Vienna. There was no room to sit down either in this or in the small ante-room adjoining, but few chairs having been provided. The audience crowded round the four players, who had only just room for their desks and seats. They were some of the most distinguished of the younger *virtuosi* of Vienna; and had devoted themselves to the important task with all the enthusiasm of youth, having rehearsed seventeen times—if not more—before

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<sup>1</sup> Rellstab is wrong in this. Op. 127 belonged to Schott, of Mainz, but there was only a manuscript copy of it in Vienna, as it had only been recently finished, and this was its first performance.

venturing to play the new enigmatical work in the semi-publicity of an assembly of *cognoscenti*. Beethoven's last quartets were then considered full of such insuperable difficulties and inexplicable mysteries, that these enthusiastic young men had alone dared to make the attempt, the older and more celebrated artists having declared at once that the performance was an impossibility.<sup>1</sup>

"The quartet performed was the one in E flat major, Opus 127. That the hearers might not make too light of the study and work of the performers in surmounting such monstrous difficulties, it had been arranged that it should be played twice successively. The performance began amid the most intense silence and rapt attention. No wonder! for there was a total absence of the narrow-minded crowd who measure the sublime by the same standard as the superficial. Everyone in this select assembly understood what he heard, which produced a most significant community of sentiment; and there was present the thought, which struck one with wonderful force, that the creator of the profound work was still living and near to us, striving, perhaps, in the gloom and solitude of his sick chamber to rise above the sadness and hard

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<sup>1</sup> Ignorance about matters in Vienna at that time has again led the narrator astray. The first violinists of Vienna—Schuppanzigh, Mayseder, and Böhm—executed the quartet. They were certainly all three of them young, but only in years, not in art.

struggles of life into a new world of immortal thought. There, in Vienna, his spirit was undeniably more operative and closer to us than it could be elsewhere. From my mind, at any rate, his image and surroundings were not a moment absent ; and, as every artist who admires and reverences the greatest creative genius of our time will feel, this hallowed my enjoyment.

“ This is not a suitable place to criticise the work, which may be described as marked by melancholy earnestness, rarely enlivened by a smile. It produced but one impression upon all. A feeling of reverence for its creator took possession of every heart ; perhaps no one perfectly understood the work (this is a task for all time), or found the same thing in it : it is the characteristic of the sublime that we do not comprehend it—that, like a mysterious superior power, it exalts and impels us forward. The one pervading sentiment—although excited, perhaps, by very different causes—was that of beholding something altogether beyond one’s capacity and comprehension.<sup>1</sup>

“ When the second performance was over, our feelings found vent in words : the superficial people talked most ; those who had been deeply affected were absorbed in their own musings.

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<sup>1</sup> Rellstab, as we have remarked, had neither in this instance, nor in general, attained to a true understanding of Beethoven’s art. But he had a clearer glimpse of his creative genius than had Beethoven’s real son—Richard Wagner.



“ Being a stranger, I was introduced by my companion to several distinguished musicians and other persons of note. Suddenly, I heard a name which surprised me. ‘Herr Beethoven,’ said my companion, presenting me to an elegantly-dressed gentleman in an overcoat. It was the composer’s brother. He at once began to talk of him, and told me a great deal about what had been done to restore his hearing. ‘I promised 10,000 gulden to the doctor who could cure him,’ he said. I was delighted with his active sympathy with the affliction of his brother, who, as he said, was, unfortunately, generally looked upon as eccentric. Beethoven’s brother asked me all sorts of things about Berlin,—what was thought of his brother there, and whether his works were often performed. I was happily able to reply that the great genius was probably more honoured there than in Vienna even; that there were regular performances of his symphonies and quartets; that *Fidelio* never disappeared from the opera repertory (as it unfortunately did in Vienna); and that among educated amateurs Beethoven received the highest, if not the sole, homage. Whereupon, Herr Beethoven lamented that this was not the case in Vienna. He praised a new musical paper, the editor of which was emphatically Beethoven’s eulogist, but whose admiration was in my opinion of a very doubtful kind, and had for the most part degenerated into one of those numerous and perverse attempts, which have occasioned so much

bewilderment among the imitators of the great composer, to explain his incomprehensible mysteries. His enthusiasm over this vapid, meaningless admiration of his great brother gave me a slight feeling, I will not say of distrust, but of uncomfortableness towards my new acquaintance. We shall see how far I was herein justified.<sup>1</sup>

“So the evening was over. If I had not seen, I had heard Beethoven, had beheld the latest specimen of his strange and marvellous productions; it was almost as if I had drunk directly from his spirit. How many points of interest would this give me for conversation, and especially for the object I had in view. Much as I had lost that day, and many as were my unfulfilled hopes, I had received enough to be deeply thankful.

“Beethoven’s indisposition continued, for April was inclement. Meanwhile, the time for my departure from Vienna drew near, and I began to be anxious lest I should not see him again.

“If I could not ring at his door every day to

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<sup>1</sup> Here again is the same narrow art criticism of which there is so much now-a-days in the Berlin criticisms on Richard Wagner. The editor of that Viennese newspaper was Beethoven’s bosom friend, F. A. Kanne, who, although he may not have fully comprehended the hidden unity of these wonderful last works, recognised in them a lofty, spiritual, and a living organism. And that was something in those days. There is nothing of “vapid, meaningless admiration.” Let the reader compare “Beethoven’s Life,” III., 500, 541.

inquire how he was, I constantly received news from one quarter or another. He was suffering from no definite disease, but what was worse, from a chronic weakness, which, of course, increased his hypochondriaism. During this interval, I happened to meet Beethoven's nephew, who lives with him. He volunteered the remark, 'You have sent my uncle some very beautiful poems ; he is very much obliged to you for them, and says that he means to set them to music.' Those who are neither poets nor worshippers of Beethoven will easily understand that this intelligence, although it might be merely a polite speech, highly delighted me. If I ought only to believe half of it, even the doubt itself was a source of rare enjoyment, and a whole garden of hope blossomed in my mind's eye.

"At length, after an interval of more than a fortnight. I determined to make another visit. With the old trepidation, I rang at the well-known door ; it opened, and Beethoven himself stood before me. This was a surprise, for which I was so totally unprepared that it caused me no little embarrassment. Who would have expected Beethoven to answer his own door, like any ordinary citizen ? But his good-natured, friendly manner helped me out of my difficulty. For, although he at first looked displeased at the unwelcome interruption, he said very kindly, 'Ah, it is you ! You have not been to see me for a very long time ; I thought you had gone away.' These

words surprised me, but as writing was the only means of answering, I contented myself with indicating by signs that I could not possibly have left without bidding him farewell, at least by letter.

"Beethoven led me into his room, and handing me the writing tablet, which was always at hand, invited me to sit down. I wrote, 'Your illness deterred me from coming.'

" 'Ah,' he cried, shaking his head, 'that should not have prevented you. My condition during the last few days is my usual one in winter. I shall not be well till I go into the country in the summer. Who told you I was so ill?' I briefly related what had happened. He shook his head again. 'I often have fits of melancholy,' he continued, 'when I give directions to admit no one! But they don't know how to make any distinction. There are so many troublesome visitors—grand people whom I do not care anything about!'

" 'Did you receive my poetry?' I wrote, after a moment's pause.

"He nodded, and pointed to the table, where a few sheets were lying under a number of other papers. 'I am very pleased with them,' he said, 'I think of setting some of them to music when I am well.'

"I seized his hand, and pressed it warmly. This seemed to me more expressive than writing the formal words, 'That would give me the greatest pleasure.' The responsive pressure of his hand and his looks showed that he understood me.

“ ‘In the winter,’ he added, after a few moments, ‘I do but little ; I only write out and score what I have composed in the summer. But that takes a long time. I am now working at a mass. When I get into the country, I am fit for anything.’ <sup>1</sup>

“As he was silent, and seemed to expect me to say something, I wrote, ‘I made your brother’s acquaintance last week.’

“These words did not produce a happy effect. Beethoven’s face assumed a half displeased, half melancholy expression. ‘Ah, my brother !’ he said at length, ‘he is a great talker, he must have wearied you.’

“Beethoven evidently endeavoured to conceal, by an indirect reply, the bitter feelings he did not wish to express. I heard afterwards that he was on very bad terms with his brother ; whether justifiably or no is not for me to decide. But when I spoke to other people about the promise of 10,000 gulden to the physician who should cure Beethoven, they showed little faith in this generous zeal.<sup>2</sup>

“To dispel the unpleasant impression occasioned by my observation, I wrote that I had heard the E flat

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<sup>1</sup> If Rellstab has not confused this with the oratorio *The Triumph of the Cross*, Beethoven was referring either to the Mass for the Emperor Francis, which his friends had urged him to compose in the years 1822-3, or the Requiem for Kinsky.

<sup>2</sup> We are acquainted with his unfortunate relations with this “pseudo-brother,” Johann, of whom we shall presently hear enough.

major Quartet. A moment of gladness passed over his languid face when he read the words ; then he said, as if blaming himself, ' It is so difficult. It must have been played badly ! How did it go ? '

" I replied with the utmost brevity, ' It had been carefully practised, and was played twice successively. '

" ' That's good. It requires several hearings. How did you like it ? '

" The answer to this question caused me no little embarrassment. . . . I have now no hesitation in expressing my conviction that, in this last (?) enigmatical work of Beethoven's, we find but the ruins of the early beauty and manly grandeur of his genius buried under a desolate heap of *débris*. . . . What was I to say then ? I could, however, freely speak the truth by describing the impression which the whole made upon me, and which was a glorification of the master, if not of the work. So I wrote, ' My soul was profoundly and divinely agitated. ' Beethoven read it, and said nothing. We looked at one another, and were both silent ; but a world of emotions overwhelmed me. Beethoven, too, was unmistakeably moved. He rose, went to the window, and stood beside his piano. The sight of him so near to his instrument awakened a thought which I had not before ventured to entertain. Ah ! if he would but half turn round, he would be in front of the key-board ; if he would but sit down, and express his feelings in tones ! In happy, anxious hopefulness, I went close

up to him and put my hand on the piano, which was an English Broadwood. To make Beethoven turn round, I softly struck a chord with the left hand ; but he did not seem to hear it. In a minute or two he turned round to me, and seeing that I was looking at the instrument, said, 'It is a beautiful piano. It was sent me as a present from London. Look at the names !' He pointed to the cross-piece over the keyboard. There I read the names : Moscheles, Kalkbrenner, Cramer, Clementi, and Broadwood.<sup>1</sup> The incident was impressive. The wealthy, artistic manufacturer who presented it to Beethoven could not have devoted his instrument, which seemed a specially good one, to a better purpose. The great artists mentioned had reverently subscribed their names as sharers in the scheme ; and so this strange autographical page had come from far over the sea to lay the homage of the great at the feet of the highest and greatest. 'It is a handsome present, and has a fine tone,' said Beethoven, looking at me and putting out his hands towards the keyboard, but without turning round. He struck a chord softly. Never will another fill me with such melancholy. He had C major in the right hand, and struck B in the bass ;

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<sup>1</sup> The names originally on the piano were : Kalkbrenner, Ries, Cramer, Ferrari, and Kuyvelt. If Moscheles's was there, he must have put it himself when Beethoven lent him the piano for a concert in the autumn of 1823. But Clementi's was certainly not there.



and looking at me, steadily repeated the wrong chord several times that I might hear the sweet tone of the instrument ; yet the greatest musician on earth did not perceive the discord.

“I do not know whether Beethoven noticed his mistake ; but, turning from me, he struck a few chords which were quite correct and in their usual positions, and then left off playing ; and this was all I ever heard from him !”

Rellstab then discusses Beethoven's deafness and relates, from Ries's verbal communications, the story of the origin of the Finale in the great F minor Sonata, Op. 57 ; and thus confirms a fact with which we have been acquainted since 1838. Neither of these points need detain us now. The narrator continues—

“ . . . Filled with this melancholy impression, I left Beethoven. My hopes for a new great work—the opera—withered under this gloomy sky and oppressive atmosphere. Without some miracle of healing, it was impossible that this sick and afflicted spirit could arouse itself to a work requiring some years for its completion.”

The observations on Beethoven's last work, which follow, are another proof of this poet's inability to comprehend such lofty poetry. He went to Grillparzer, who, of course, only confirmed him in his unhappy opinions of Beethoven. His enthusiasm about the opera text had cooled, and he only gives the following incident relative to his departure—

“My stay in Vienna, for the present, at any rate, was at an end. . . . I could scarcely spare an hour to bid Beethoven farewell. . . . Of the particulars of this last visit I can say but little. Beethoven spoke with much freedom and feeling. I expressed my regret that during the whole time of my sojourn in Vienna, I had not heard one of his compositions at a concert, only one of his symphonies, none of his quartets (except the last), and that there had been no representation of *Fidelio*! This gave occasion for him to say something about the taste of the Viennese public. ‘The Italians (*barbaja*) have supplanted all that was pure and good. To the nobility the ballet is the chief thing in the theatre. Speak not of a love of art, they have only a love of dancers. We have had good times here; but I do not care about that, I will only write what pleases me. If I were well, it would be all the same to me.’ He expressed himself in these and similar terms.<sup>1</sup>

“I wrote on the tablet, ‘I start to-morrow for Presburg, Eisenstadt; but I shall return in the beginning of May, and perhaps remain a few days.’

“‘You are going already!’ he exclaimed in astonish-

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<sup>1</sup> He kept his promise with himself: that “tragedy of passion,” the A minor Quartet, was finished this summer; the great B major Quartet, Op. 130, and the powerful tragic C sharp minor Quartet directly followed. The climax was reached in that soul-searching swan song, the last Quartet, Op. 135. While truly “writing what pleased him,” he left to posterity a legacy of the purest pleasure.

ment. Owing to the difficulty of communication, I had always restricted myself to what was essential to be said, and had hitherto told him nothing about the conclusion of my visit to Vienna. 'Yes, you are right,' he continued, 'the weather is fine; I am thinking, also, of going into the country. When you return, I shall perhaps be at Mödling again. I feel better there, and you must come and see me.'

"I had but little hope of this. . . . I expressed a fear that this would be the last time we should see each other, till I came to Vienna for a longer stay, which I had every intention of doing next year. But how long and full of uncertainty is a year! How I should have liked to have brought away some souvenir from Beethoven's room—one of those strange-looking and scarcely legible sheets of music; but how could I dare to ask him such a thing!

" 'I am sure we shall see each other again,' he said, after a short pause, in such a warm, kindly tone that I felt he would be glad to see me. This made the parting, for the moment, all the harder. But it had come, and I got up. As usual, I put out my hand to say good-bye, when he took both mine, drew me to him, and kissed me in such hearty German fashion, without the least affectation of sentiment, but from a pure impulse of affection, that I felt my whole soul moved. In unspeakable happiness, I clasped the dear and honoured man in my arms. Yes, I felt that my love had touched a sympathetic chord in his heart, and

that he was warmly grateful for my ardent and undivided affection. And was this affection a new experience to him? . . . The whole scene was like a dream to me ; but so real, so warm, so natural, so elevating. The immortal Ludwig van Beethoven in my arms ! I felt his lips on mine, and he must have felt my warm, happy tears.

“ Thus I left him. I thought nothing, but was only sensible of the heart-stirring consciousness that Beethoven had embraced me !

“ And I shall be proud of this to the last day of my life.”

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On his return to Vienna after his Hungarian expedition, Rellstab did not find Beethoven at home, and left his name with a farewell word. But the next day he received a letter, that had been left at Steiner's for him. It was addressed to Herr L. Nellstab (instead of Rellstab), and “ sounded so kind, good, and sad ”—

“ Being on the point of going into the country, I was obliged to go out to make some arrangements yesterday, and so your call was unfortunately in vain. On account of my health, which is still very weak, I shall not perhaps see you again ; but I wish you all imaginable good. Think of me in your poems.

“ Your friend,

“ BEETHOVEN.

“ Present my affectionate regards to Zelter, the brave upholder of true art.

“ May 3rd, 1825.”

On the other side was the following—

“I am, though convalescent, still extremely weak ;  
kindly accept this trifling souvenir from your friend,

“ BEETHOVEN.”



Rellstab concludes—

“I did not visit the imperial city again till 1841,  
when I stood at the grave of the great man.”





## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.



THE following story, with its truly Beethovenish *dénouement*, appeared in the *Thüringischen Zeitung* about twelve years ago. I know nothing further about it, and can only infer, from a letter written by Beethoven in 1804, that G. Wiedebein was from Brunswick, where he was bandmaster in 1822—

“The bandmaster W——n, from B——k, had long cherished an ardent desire of becoming personally acquainted with Beethoven, the object of his unbounded admiration; and, in 1825, he devoted the whole of his holiday to this purpose. When arrived within about a mile of Vienna, while waiting for the methodical and careful driver to refresh his four tired horses with a mouthful of corn and a good draught of barley water, W——n strolled out to look at the ever-widening panorama of the magnificent imperial city. His steps were arrested by a waggon, which had been upset in the road; two men had just tied up the

broken wheel, and, with the active assistance of a passing pedestrian, were replacing the sacks of grain which had fallen out. W——n thought it only neighbourly not to remain idle ; order was soon restored, and the two volunteers walked on to the city together.

“The stranger seemed extremely reticent or very deaf, for all attempts at inducing him to talk failed. He was a strong-looking man of about fifty years of age, and well, but somewhat untidily, dressed. When they reached the city walls, W——n, intending to wait for his driver, prepared to take leave of his companion. The stranger, for the sake of politeness probably, asked whom he had had the pleasure of accompanying. W——n gave his name without hesitation ; but, on preferring a similar request himself, was almost struck dumb with astonishment by the dry, laconic answer, ‘My name is Beethoven.’

“Mutual explanations followed. W——n was overjoyed, regarding it as the happiest of accidents which had brought him, before he had even entered Vienna, to the goal of his desires ; and he frankly confessed that Beethoven alone was the magnet that had drawn him from the distant north. Beethoven seemed very pleased, rubbed his hands with glee, laughed heartily, and, without any ceremony, invited the traveller to stay with him during his sojourn in Vienna. Beethoven would listen to no objections, and told the driver, who just then put in an appear-



ance, to take the luggage to an address which he had scrawled in pencil ; and he triumphantly carried off his brother artist, leading him through the extensive suburb to his abode, where he ordered every care to be taken for the comfort of his guest. W——n made it his first business next morning to repair to the study of the hospitable host ; but he found the bird already flown, and was told that the master always went out at sunrise, and did not return till nightfall, if then ; and that when he came back, he always shut himself up to write, and was accessible to no one.

“ A fortnight slowly passed away ; every day brought the same news, the same old story. W——n beheld, indeed, many of the wonders of the splendid capital, but he never saw Beethoven again. All his hopes of a friendly and instructive intimacy had gone to the wind ; the invisible one never re-appeared—an impassable barrier separated host and guest—and the end of his visit arrived, but the guest's thanks could only be tendered in writing.”





## CHAPTER XXXV.

### A LADY.



THE following "extract from the letter of an English lady in Vienna, October, 1825," appeared in the *Harmonicum* for December, 1825. The lady is, perhaps, Lady Clifford, who wished to visit Beethoven in the autumn of 1826. The letter says—

" . . . The imperial library is the finest room I ever saw, and the librarian<sup>1</sup> is very kind and obliging. What will you say when I tell you that, after infinite trouble, he succeeded in procuring my admittance to Beethoven, who, although in general so extremely difficult of approach, replied as follows to the note requesting that I might be permitted to visit him—

" 'Avec le plus grand plaisir, je recevrai une fille de ——.'

"We repaired to Baden, a pretty little town in the Duchy of Austria, some fifteen English miles south-

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<sup>1</sup> This was Count Moritz Dietrichstein, through whom Beethoven had negotiated with Grillparzer.

west of Vienna, very much frequented for its hot baths (whence its name, like our Bath), and which is the summer residence of the giant of living composers—as Mr. —, to my great satisfaction, always calls him.

“ People seemed surprised that we took so much trouble to see Beethoven ; for, incredible as it may seem to those who have any knowledge and love of music, his reign is over in Vienna, except in the hearts of a select minority, no one of whom, I may say *en passant*, I have yet met ; and I was told to be prepared for a rough and discourteous reception. When we arrived, he had just been driven home by a shower, and was changing his coat. After all I had heard of his *brusquerie*, I felt alarmed lest he should not receive us very cordially ; but when he came out of his sanctum, with hasty, yet very firm steps, he spoke so gently and politely, and with such sincere friendliness in his manner, that I can only compare him to Mr. —, whom he very much resembles in face, figure, bearing, and sentiments.<sup>1</sup>

“ He is short, thin, and sufficiently careful about his personal appearance. He remarked that — thought a great deal of Handel, that he himself loved him, and he expatiated for a while on the merits of that great composer. I conversed with him by writing, for I found it impossible to make myself heard ; and although this was a very stilted style of

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<sup>1</sup> “ A literary man, remarkable for his kindliness of heart and simplicity of manners,” says the *Harmonicum*.

communication, it was not of so much consequence, as he talked very freely, and seemed neither to wait for questions nor to expect long answers. I ventured to express my admiration of his compositions ; and, among others, praised his *Adelaide* in terms not at all too strong for my estimate of its beauties. He modestly remarked that the poetry was very fine.

“ Beethoven speaks French well—at least, in comparison with other Germans ; he also conversed with —— a little in Latin. He told me that he would have learned to speak as well as to read English, but for his deafness. He preferred English to French authors, for, said he, ‘ *Ils sont plus vrais.*’ Thomson is his favourite, but he has very great admiration for Shakespeare.<sup>1</sup>

“ When we were preparing to leave, he begged us to stay, saying, ‘ *Je veux vous donner un souvenir de moi.*’ He went to a table in the next room, and wrote a couple of lines of music—a little fugue for the piano—which he presented to me in the kindest manner.<sup>2</sup> Then he asked me to spell my name that he might dedicate his impromptu correctly. He took my arm, and led me into the room where he had

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<sup>1</sup> Beethoven knew little French and less Latin ; the lady, perhaps, confused the latter with Spanish or Italian, which he understood very well. He may have begun English in prospect of going to London, but he could not read it.

<sup>2</sup> It was a canon, such as he often sent as a souvenir. What has become of it ?

been writing (that I might see the whole of his dwelling). It was quite characteristic of an author, but scrupulously clean ; and, although there was no trace of luxury, neither was there any sign of poverty, either in a lack of necessary furniture or of neatness. But it must not be forgotten that this is his country house, and that the Viennese are neither so extravagant nor so particular about their household appointments as we are.

“ I cautiously led him into an opposite room, in which stood the piano presented to him by Messrs. Broadwood ; but the sight of it seemed to make him sad. It was, he said, very much out of order, for the country tuner was very incompetent, and he struck a few notes to convince me of the fact. But I placed the manuscript he had just given me on the desk, and he played it through quite simply, with three or four chords as a prelude—such handfuls of notes, as would have touched Mr. ——— to the heart. Then he stopped, and I would on no account have asked for more, as I found that he played without the least pleasure to himself.

“ We took leave of each other in a manner which, in France, would be considered indicative of lasting friendship ; and he said, of his own accord, that he would certainly visit us when he came to England.”



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

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### *BEETHOVEN AND SCHUBERT.*



N the *Süddeutschen Zeitung*, for 1804, there appeared a short article entitled "Beethoven," by Braun von Braunthal (born at Eger, 1802), which we cannot afford to miss, on account of the facts which it contains.

It relates to the last year of Beethoven's life, and includes an expression of opinion by Franz Schubert, which well accords with what he has said elsewhere. Braunthal left Vienna in the autumn of 1826. He writes—

"During the last years of his life, I frequently saw Beethoven at a little inn in Vienna on winter evenings.

"He had entirely lost his hearing at that time. Everyone showed him the greatest respect when he entered the room. He was a sturdy-looking man of middle height, with grey hair flowing like a mane from his truly lion-like head; he had a wandering expression in his grey eyes, and was unsteady in his movements, as if walking in a dream. He would sit

down with a glass of beer and a long pipe, and close his eyes. If one of his friends spoke, or rather bawled to him, he opened his eyes like an eagle started from its slumbers, smiled sadly, drew a pocket-book and pencil from his breast pocket, and, in the shrill voice peculiar to deaf people, bid his visitor write what he had to say. Sometimes he replied himself in writing, sometimes verbally, but always readily and kindly.

“When I saw the great man for the first time sitting opposite to me, I said to myself, ‘Oh, thou glorious genius! it would be the most heart-rending irony of fate, and the bitterest of mockeries, that while refreshing the spiritual ears of all civilised humanity, thou art thyself excluded from the heaven of thy music, were it not at the same time the grandest of divine decrees. For, as thy bodily ear presents a barrier against the entrance of the prosaic voices of daily life and the fawning and halting tones of the nether world, so does the ear of thy soul admit more freely the grand harmony of the spheres, the melancholy strains of presentiment, the thunder of secret sorrow; then does thy thought first embody itself in form, and thou, as is possible only to the greatest of poets, art lost in its contemplation. Therefore, thou gladly shuttest up thy bodily eyes to admit thy spiritual vision, and to revel undisturbed in the blissful enjoyment of thy phantasy.’

“Sometimes he would take another larger pocket-book from the left-hand breast pocket of his simple



grey overcoat, and write something with half-closed eyes. 'What is he writing?' I asked one evening of my neighbour Schubert, the incomparable song composer, whose career came so prematurely to an end. 'He is composing,' was his answer. 'But he writes words, not notes!' 'That is his way; he generally (?) indicates the course of his ideas for a piece of music by words, with at most a few notes here and there. He still plays the piano very well; to hear him, no one would believe that he was deaf, so pure and certain is his touch (?). Art has become a science with him; he knows what he can do, and his phantasy obeys his profound knowledge.' Schubert said on another occasion, 'He can do everything, but we cannot yet understand it all. The Danube will empty itself many times into the ocean before his creations are universally comprehended. And this, not only because he is the most sublime and prolific of composers, but also because he is the most playful. He is equally great in dramatic, epic, lyric, and prosaic music; in a word, he can do everything. Mozart stands in the same relation to him as Schiller does to Shakespeare: Schiller is already understood, Shakespeare is still far from being fully comprehended. Everyone understands Mozart; no one thoroughly comprehends Beethoven. He must have an immense intellect, but still a larger heart, and have loved unfortunately, or have been otherwise unhappy.'

“Schubert always expressed himself so pithily, so heartily, intelligently, and concisely. . . .”

We need not quote the æsthetic effusion which follows. But we know that Schubert did think thus about Beethoven, from something he said in his youth. He asked a friend, after the performance of some of his own songs, whether he thought that he (Schubert) would ever become anything? His friend replied that he was already something. “I say so to myself sometimes,” said Schubert, “but who can do anything after Beethoven?”





## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### BEETHOVEN IN FLAGRANTE.



THE following "Sketch by S." appeared, some fifteen years ago, in Zellner's *Blättern für Musik*. Atterbom, whom we have already quoted, said nothing of a personal meeting with Beethoven; this could not therefore have occurred in 1819, and Atterbom must have made a second visit to Vienna. The mention of the Schwarzschaner house, which Beethoven moved into in 1825, and the unusual circumstance of his not leaving the city all through the hot summer of 1826, supply us with the date for this incident. It is very characteristic of our master when absorbed in his work; but we cannot discover what moved him to write in such a fashion, nor what it was which he thus composed *al fresco*. The account says—

"The Swedish poet, Atterbom, famous for his "Insel der Glückseligkeit" and his literary struggles, went to visit Vienna, that joy-drunk city—as he calls it in

his "Travels"—and to become acquainted with its poets, savans and composers.

"Among these was his friend Dr. Ignaz Jeitteles, noted for his sarcastic wit and original thought, and known to the general public by his "*Æsthetic Lexicon*." He belonged to a literary family in which philosophy, medicine, theology, and poetry had for the last century been almost hereditary. Jeitteles promised to satisfy Atterbom's desire to see Beethoven. So, one hot summer afternoon they betook themselves to the celebrated master's house, which was situated at some distance from the heart of the city. The interview took place under very peculiar circumstances. I give the story of it in Jeitteles's own words—

" 'We went one hot afternoon to the Alservorstadt, and mounted to the second storey of the so-called Schwarzschaner house. We rang, no one answered ; we lifted the latch, the door was open, the ante-room empty. We knocked at the door of Beethoven's room, and, receiving no reply, repeated our knock more loudly. But we got no answer, although we could hear there was someone inside. We entered, and what a scene presented itself ! The wall facing us was hung with huge sheets of paper covered with charcoal marks ; Beethoven was standing before it, with his back turned towards us, but in what a condition ! Oppressed by the excessive heat, he had divested himself of everything but his shirt, and was busily employed writing notes on the wall with a lead

pencil, beating time and striking a few chords on his stringless pianoforte. He did not once turn towards the door. We looked at each other in amused perplexity. It was no use trying to attract the deaf master's attention by making a noise; and he would have felt embarrassed, had we gone up to him. I said to Atterbom, "Would you, as a poet, like to take away with you to the north the consciousness of having, perhaps, arrested the loftiest flight of genius? You can at least say, 'I have seen Beethoven create.' Let us leave, unseen and unheard!" We departed. We had certainly caught him *in flagranti*. When we arrived at the Glacis, we both laughed over the odd position in which we had been. This forms an original chapter in my Travels.'"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We are unable to ascertain whether Atterbom wrote any other travels than these above mentioned.





## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

DR. SPIKER.



R. SPIKER, the royal librarian, and editor of the *Berliner Nachrichten von Staats-und Gelehrten Sachen*, wrote in the issue of that journal for April 5th, 1827, an obituary notice of Beethoven entitled "Recollections of Beethoven." We have only to prefix that this Berlin *littérateur*, who was, as Castelli said, "ein Lebemann fast wie ein Wiener" (as jovial as a Viennese), witty without being stinging, obliging but not ostentatious, candid and upright, had visited Beethoven in September, 1826, in company with T. Haslinger; and that Beethoven wished Dr. Spiker to negociate for him the presentation of the Ninth Symphony to King Frederick William III. He must, therefore, have had a favourable reception. He writes—

"The death of this talented musician is an irreparable loss to art. If ever an artist united an ample store of knowledge, with a rich wealth of imagination,

it was Beethoven; and if he displays in the outbursts of his phantasy too much license, too free an abandonment to the impulses of his creative energy, it must be remembered that he was debarred from all those influences which refresh the minds of other artists, that he was totally isolated, and, in his creations, drew solely upon his own resources.

“In Vienna it was no easy thing to see Beethoven. Owing to his almost complete loss of hearing, only the few to whose voices he was accustomed could talk with him; and the inconvenience of being obliged to converse with him by writing probably rendered it painful to himself to receive friends. The writer was earnestly desirous of being acquainted with Beethoven, but had little hope of so doing. There was, however, one favourable circumstance. Beethoven had dedicated his last great symphony to the King, and he desired to present his Majesty with a fair copy of the original score, with all his own corrections and insertions. Some preliminary arrangements were necessary, and these were the occasion of my visit to Beethoven.

“Beethoven was living in the suburb at the Glacis, near the Schottenthor, an open neighbourhood having a commanding view of the city and its magnificent buildings, the pleasant sunshiny rooms at the back of the house in which he lived looking out into the country. On account of his illness, he had in the last few years made frequent use of baths, the apparatus



for which we, his intimate friends (Herr Tobias Haslinger and myself), saw in the ante-room. Adjoining this is Beethoven's sitting-room, in which scores, books, *et cetera*, were piled up in happy confusion ; a grand piano, by the excellent maker, Conrad Graf, stood in the centre. The furniture was simple, and the whole appearance of the room such as one frequently finds with those who have more sense of internal than external order.<sup>1</sup> Beethoven received us very kindly. He was dressed in a simple grey morning costume, which accorded very well with his merry, jovial face, and the careless arrangement of his hair. When we had looked at the beautiful prospect from the windows, Beethoven invited us to sit down to a table, and the conversation began. On my side it was carried on in writing, while Herr Haslinger, to whose voice Beethoven was accustomed, shouted what he had to say into his ear. Beethoven spoke with great enthusiasm of our King, to whose love of art and especially of music he rendered full justice ; and expressed great pleasure at having been permitted (the permission had been communicated through the late Prince Hatzfeld) to dedicate his last symphony to his Majesty. He referred, also, with much gratification to a kind letter he had received

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<sup>1</sup> This was the Schwarzspanier house at the Alserglacis, and was the last he lived in. The statement about the piano is correct, for Beethoven had at that time two instruments in his room.

from her Majesty the Empress Alexandra, requesting him to select a Vienna piano for her, and spoke very warmly of the love of the royal family for art.

“His own affairs in Vienna he seemed purposely to avoid speaking of; but he talked very cheerfully, and instead of being, as is commonly thought, gloomy and shy, he laughed over every joke with the heartiness of a perfectly unsuspecting nature.

“It was very interesting to see his musical sketch book, which he said he always took with him when he walked out, that he might note down any thought that occurred to him; it was full of detached bars, the outline of figures, *et cetera*. Several large books of the same kind, containing longer fragments of music written in ink, lay on the desk beside the piano. On account of his deafness, a curious apparatus had been affixed to his grand piano—a kind of sounding board, under which he sits while playing, and which collects and concentrates the sound around him. His affliction rendered conversation with him very difficult; but, owing to his unusual vivacity, he seemed little sensible of the inconvenience. Paper and pencil were produced directly we came in, and a sheet was soon filled with questions and replies to his interrogations. Among the many portraits of Beethoven, the one taken in his early years by Louis Letronne, engraved by Riedel, is, to my thinking, the best likeness. There was an uncommon vivacity and brilliancy in his eyes, and his general activity little led one to expect the near approach of his death.

"None of the imperial princes took a keener interest in his fortunes than his protector and patron, the Cardinal Archbishop Rudolph, who possessed the most complete collection of Beethoven's works, arranged in a long row of handsome folio volumes.

"Many of these are accompanied by a portion of the original manuscript, with some artistically written title. This collection was formerly the property of Herr Tobias Haslinger, successor to the well-known music publisher, Steiner, himself a composer, and much respected on account of his efforts for the promotion of music ; as an old friend of Beethoven, he had gathered together his works, which he left to the Archduke."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This collection is now in the archives of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, at Vienna.





## CHAPTER XXXIX.

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### *BEETHOVEN AT GNEIXENDORF.*



UCH was the title of an article in the *Deutsche Musikzeitung*, for 1862, and which appeared in the essay entitled "Beethoven's Death," in my "Musikalische Skizzenbuch," in 1866. A few words may be added by way of explanation.

We have seen what Rellstab said of the unnatural brother, Johann. He was originally an apothecary at Linz, but acquired a considerable fortune by undertaking army contracts in 1809, and now possessed the pretty estate of Gneixendorf, near Krems, on the Danube. His disagreeable matrimonial relations had hitherto rendered it impossible for Beethoven to visit him. But in the autumn of 1826, his house seemed Beethoven's only refuge.

In the month of August, his nephew, young Karl, had been led, by his own excesses and his uncle's injudicious treatment of his faults and vices, to attempt suicide; and the police had ordered his immediate

departure from Vienna. Johann offered him an asylum in his house, until another residence could be found for the young man. The negotiations for his admission into the army caused some delay, and time was also necessary for the complete healing of the wound ; while Beethoven, on his part, protracted the visit that he might induce his brother, who was childless, but avaricious, to make his will in Karl's favour. The disputes between the master and his brother, but more especially Beethoven's bad state of health during this sojourn at Gneixendorf, were the principal causes of that internal malady which attacked him directly after his return, and laid the seeds of his death.

The following particulars about the visit are, therefore, of greater importance than they would otherwise be. They show the rapid decline of the great master's bodily and mental powers ; his troubles seemed too heavy for him, he had lost the capacity of averting or bearing them, and of his former self there is but little trace. But let us hear what the writer, Dr. L., has to say : he gives a sad picture, a shadow of the approaching end—

“Convinced that the smallest details are of importance which serve to increase our knowledge of this incomparable tone-master, I applied, some time ago, to my early friend, K——, an apothecary in Langenlois, asking him to tell me all he knew about Beethoven's sojourn at Gneixendorf, in lower

Austria, a country seat belonging to Johann van Beethoven. Both he and the present owner of the estate acceded most willingly to my request. I give in the slight, fragmentary form in which I received it, all that could be gathered by these trust-worthy enquirers.

“One day Johann van Beethoven, accompanied by his brother, Ludwig, and several other people, went from Gneixendorf to Langenfeld to visit the surgeon, Karrer, who was a friend of the family. He was not at home, having been summoned to a patient; but Frau Karrer, feeling highly flattered by a visit from the squire (*gutsbesitzer*), entertained the party with all the hospitality in her power. The composer was sitting modestly and silently on the bench by the stove; and the mistress, mistaking him for a servant, filled an earthenware jug with wine, and handed it to him, saying kindly, ‘Here is a draught for you, too.’

“When the surgeon returned late in the evening, he at once guessed from the description who it was who had sat at the stove, and exclaimed, ‘My dear wife, what have you done; the greatest composer of the age has been in our house to-day, and you have treated him in this disrespectful way!’

“Johann van Beethoven happening to have some business with the Syndic Sterz, at Langenlois, Ludwig accompanied him thither. During the somewhat lengthy interview, Ludwig stood at the office door, motionless and uninterested. Sterz bowed very

respectfully when he left, and then said to his clerk, Fux—an enthusiast for music, and especially Beethoven's—'Who do you think the man was standing at the door?' Fux replied, 'As you were so polite to him, sir, I can only suppose that he is a person of some importance; otherwise, I should have taken him for an imbecile' (*trottel*). Fux was not a little horrified when his master told him the name of the man, whom he had thought a fool.

"This must be attributed, adds my informant, to the indifferent, apathetic bearing which Beethoven's deafness caused him to assume, for his expression of countenance was anything but one of imbecility, especially the wonderfully striking and almost wild flash of his eyes. To this I can bear personal testimony, as I, too, was fortunate enough to come face to face with this extraordinary man, even to attract his attention, although in no very agreeable a manner. Being a youth, fresh from the country, I had not acquired the nimbleness and dexterity necessary for threading one's way through the crowded thoroughfare of the metropolis. So one day I ran against a man, who transfixed me with a penetrating glance, and walked on. I shall never forget that eye, into whose shining depths I had gazed. But is it surprising that, trying to reconcile the slovenly dress and sunburnt face of the stranger with his look of intelligence and superiority, I came to the conclusion that I had fallen in with one of those shrewd sharpers who



frequent large towns. With this idea in my mind, I used to look at him, whenever we met, with curiosity and with, I regret to say, anything but respect. He observed this, for he once darted at me from his small bright eyes a look half of astonishment and half of contempt, and then took no further notice. When told by a friend who he was, I bowed to the ground every time I saw him, but he ignored my politeness as he had my rudeness."

We read again—

" . . . . Michael Krenn, who died a year ago, was one of the servants of the Gneixendorf establishment while Beethoven was staying there ; and Michael, one of Krenn's three sons who are still living, was in service there at the same time. He gives the following account—

"Ludwig van Beethoven was only at Gneixendorf once, for about three months, from the reaping to the vintage (that would be in August, September, and October), in 1826.<sup>1</sup>

"Michael Krenn was engaged by the mistress of the house to wait upon Beethoven. At first, however, the cook used to make his bed every day. One

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<sup>1</sup> The time of Beethoven's visit is precisely fixed by a letter to Schott, dated Vienna, September 29th, 1826, which begins—"On the point of going into the country, I hasten to inform you," and further by a letter to Haslinger, on the outside of which is written, in Beethoven's hand, "Gneixendorf, October 2nd, 1826."

morning she could not help laughing at Beethoven as he sat at his table, waving his hands, beating time with his feet, and singing or humming. Beethoven, happening to turn round and see her, without more ado sent her out of the room. Michael was going to run away with her, but Beethoven detained him, gave him sixpence, and told him not to be afraid, and that in future *he* must make the bed and keep the room tidy.

“Michael was obliged to come up early, but generally had to knock a long time before the door was opened. Beethoven used to rise at half-past five, and sit down to write, beating time with feet and hands, and singing or humming. At first Michael used to slip away when he felt inclined to laugh, but he gradually grew quite accustomed to these proceedings. Breakfast was at 7.30; after which Beethoven always hurried out into the fields, where he would go along, waving his hands, screaming, walking by turns rapidly and slowly, then suddenly stand still, and write in a kind of pocket-book. One day, on returning home, he found he had dropped this. ‘Michael,’ said he, ‘run and fetch my book; I must have it at any cost, you are sure to find it. At half-past twelve, Beethoven returned to dinner, then stayed in his room till about three o’clock, when he again went out till sunset, after which he never left the house. Supper was at half-past seven; then he went to his room, and wrote till

ten, when he went to bed. Beethoven occasionally played the piano, which did not stand in his room, but in the drawing-room. Beethoven's parlour and bed-room, which no one but Michael entered, was the corner apartment, looking over the garden and courtyard ; it is now a billiard room.

“ While Beethoven was out walking in the morning, Michael had to put the room in order. He often found money on the floor. When he gave it to Beethoven, he asked him where he had found it, and when Michael pointed out the spot where the money was, made him a present of it. This happened three or four times, then Michael ceased to find any money. He always had to sit with Beethoven in the evening, and answer in writing any questions that were put to him. Beethoven often asked him what had been said about him at dinner or supper. One day the lady of the house sent Michael to Stein, with five florins, to buy some wine and fish.<sup>1</sup> Michael carelessly lost the money on the way, and returned at half-past twelve in dismay. His mistress asked where the fish was, and when he told her of the loss of the money, she immediately discharged him. Directly Beethoven came into dinner, he asked where Michael was, and the lady told him what had occurred. Beethoven was fearfully angry, gave her five florins, and vehe-

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<sup>1</sup> The boats, which went to Vienna every week with crabs and rare fish from the Upper Rhenish streams and the sea, used to call at this little town on the Danube.

mently insisted that Michael should return at once. Beethoven never appeared at dinner again, but had it brought to him in his room, where he also took his breakfast. According to Michael, Beethoven, even before this scene, scarcely ever spoke to his sister-in-law, and very rarely to his brother. He also relates that Beethoven wished to take him with him to Vienna, but was prevented by a cook, who came to fetch Beethoven.<sup>1</sup>

“The present proprietor recently received, from two old peasants, a confirmation of Michael Krenn’s statement as to Beethoven’s strange behaviour in the meadows at Gneixendorf. They first thought he was mad, and avoided him; but they gradually grew accustomed to him, and, as soon as they learned that he was the squire’s brother, always gave him a courteous salute, which, as he was always buried in thought, he seldom or never returned.

“One of these peasants, then a young man, had a little adventure with Beethoven. He was driving a pair of young oxen, unaccustomed to the yoke, from Ziegelofen to the castle, when he met Beethoven screaming and violently gesticulating. The man called out, ‘More quietly, please’; but Beethoven took no heed. The oxen were frightened, and ran up a steep bank. The driver with difficulty stopped them,

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<sup>1</sup> This was Thekla, the last cook but one; she was hired at Gneixendorf.

turned them round, and led them back to the road. Another time Beethoven was returning from Ziegehofen, singing and waving his hands; again the man called out, but in vain, and with their tails in the air the oxen rushed towards the castle, where some one stopped them. When the driver at length came up, he asked, 'Who is that man who frightened my oxen?' When he was told that he was the squire's brother, he replied, 'He is a pretty sort of brother!'

The writer concludes—

"The above slight notice seems to me worthy of publication, not because it adds two or three more to the list of anecdotes about Beethoven, but for the light it throws on the characters of the great composer and his brother.<sup>1</sup>

"How much did Johann's behaviour at Langenfeld and Langenlois show his want of respect for his noble brother, whom he, perhaps, like his labourers, regarded as little better than a fool. If the contemptible fellow had said but a word at the surgeon's, or at the syndic's, he would have saved the greatest musician of the age from humiliation. Did the haughty 'gutsbesitzer' (owner of property) fear being cast into the shade by the 'hirnbesitzer' (owner of brains)?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On October 2nd, Beethoven wrote to Haslinger, "You see I am at Gneixendorf. The name has some similarity to a broken axe. The air is salubrious." For the rest, *memento mori*.

<sup>2</sup> A reference to the well known anecdote about New Year's

“Very interesting, however, are the relations between Ludwig van Beethoven and his famulus, Michael Krenn.

“If we compare the peaceful relations between the great genius and the poor, uneducated, but good-natured, simple-minded, and, as the story of the money shows, honest countryman, with Beethoven’s frequent wrathful outbursts in the capital, we can but suppose that these explosions—so dangerous to him as a man and as an artist—although partly caused by his peculiarities and weaknesses, were often only the righteous reaction of his manly, upright, sincere nature against that contradiction of these qualities, called in cities fashion and good manners.”

This remark is, as we know, true enough, and we shall presently come to some of these “explosions,” the effects of which were fatal.

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day, 1823, when Johann sent a card to his brother, subscribing himself “Gutsbesitzer”; and Ludwig immediately wrote on the other side, “Ludwig van Beethoven, Hirnbesitzer.”





## CHAPTER XL.

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### *A MEDICAL ACCOUNT OF BEETHOVEN'S LAST ILLNESS.*



THE *Wiener Zeitschrift* published, in 1842, the following "medical account of the last days of Ludwig van Beethoven," from papers left by the surgeon, Dr. Wawruch. We shall see from his own words how it happened that this doctor, who had never seen Beethoven before, attended him in his last illness. Although the fact of Dr. Wawruch having treated Beethoven for inflammation of the lungs, instead of abdominal inflammation, gives a certain erroneous bearing to his statements, they are correct in the main, and very valuable, the mistakes being easily rectified. He writes within a month<sup>1</sup> of Beethoven's death, as follows—

"Vienna, May 20th, 1827.

"The last of the Austrian musical triumvirate

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Nohl must mean *two* months, for Beethoven died on March 26th.—TRANSLATOR.



(Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven) has passed away amid profound and universal mourning. As a man whose genius the world holds in reverence, whose gigantic talents and renowned name have penetrated to the remotest parts of the civilised globe, and belongs henceforth to the history of his art, I think that, as the physician in attendance, I do but discharge a sacred duty in laying before his numberless friends and admirers the noteworthy particulars of his illness. The life of such a rare genius is full of interest, even to its latest moments, which no one is better qualified to describe than his confidential (?) physician. This little paper is, therefore, no technical record of his illness (for what interest would this have to the unprofessional reader), but a simple description of the cheerful patience and pious resignation with which he approached his end.

“Beethoven assured me that he had from his earliest years enjoyed the most robust and vigorous health, which hardship had served only to strengthen, and the hardest study had never in the least impaired. The silent solitude of the night had always been most congenial to his glowing fancy. He, therefore, generally wrote till 3 o'clock in the morning. A short sleep of four or five hours completely refreshed him. After breakfast, he sat at his desk again till 2 o'clock in the afternoon.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It was, on the contrary, Beethoven's constant custom to rise with the sun, and not to work at all in the evening. Only

“But, at the beginning of his thirtieth year, he was suffering from hæmorrhage, and a troublesome ringing and singing in both ears. He soon became deaf, and although he would sometimes be perfectly well for months together, he at length lost his hearing entirely. All the efforts of skill were unavailing. About the same time Beethoven found his digestion beginning to suffer; the disordered state of his appetite occasioned alternate constipation and diarrhœa.

“Unaccustomed to consult medical advice, he began to indulge in spirituous liquors to restore his failing appetite, while he sought to obviate the effects of strong punch and ice by long and fatiguing walks. About seven years ago, this change in his manner of life brought him to death's door. He had a violent attack of inflammation of the bowels, which, although it yielded to medical treatment, induced much subsequent suffering and cholic pains; it was also, no doubt, partly the occasion of his last illness.<sup>1</sup>

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a great pressure of work induced him in his latter days to compose at night.

<sup>1</sup> Beethoven's early Bonn friend, Dr. Wegeler, tells us that he frequently suffered from cholic. It was only natural that after working hard all day, and not dining till 3 or 4 o'clock, he should have recruited his strength with wine, but there is not a trace of an “indulgence in spirituous liquors”—“strong punch and ice.” Dr. Wawruch invented this statement to explain Dr. Malfatti's orders, which were, however, based on purely medical reasons.

"Late in the autumn of last year (1826), Beethoven felt an irresistible desire to recruit his failing health by a visit to the country.<sup>1</sup> As his deafness made him shun all society, he was under the most unfavourable conditions, being left to himself for days, weeks, and even months together. He would often write with marvellous assiduity on the slope of some wooded hill, and then, revelling in his musings, would wander for hours through the wildest regions, in all weathers, even through heavy snow-storms. His feet began to swell; and as, for the sake of economy, he deprived himself, not only of the luxuries, but even of the comforts of life, his complaint gained quickly upon him.

"Uncasy at the gloomy prospect of being left helpless in the country in the event of illness, he longed to return to Vienna, and he performed the journey thither in what he jocosely called the wretchedest of the Devil's conveyances—a milk cart (*das elendeste Führwerk des Teufels*).<sup>2</sup>

"December was bleak, wet, cold, and frosty; Beethoven's clothing was totally unfit for the in-

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<sup>1</sup> More imperative than this "irresistible impulse," although this certainly had its influence, was the expulsion of Karl by the police.

<sup>2</sup> The real reason for this hasty departure was a violent quarrel with his brother about making Karl his heir, in consequence of which Johann had refused the use of his close carriage. Wawruch might have heard the rest from Beethoven, but there was certainly no litter used at all.

clement season, but an inward unrest, a melancholy presentiment of evil impelled him onward. He was obliged to stay the night in a village inn, in an unwarmed room, without winter windows. Towards midnight he felt the first symptoms of ague,—a dry, short cough, raging thirst, and a pain in his side. Burning with fever, he drank two or three glasses of icy-cold water, and lay helplessly longing for the dawn. Weak and ill, he had himself put on a litter, and thus reached Vienna.

“I was sent for on the third day. I found Beethoven suffering from severe inflammation of the lungs ; his face was burning, he spat blood, and was in danger of suffocation, while the pain in his side had only changed into a sharp pain in the back. Vigorous treatment for inflammation soon gave the desired relief: nature conquered, and by a happy crisis all danger was so far over that, by the fifth day, he was able to sit up, and he described to me with much agitation what he had suffered. On the seventh day, he was well enough to get up, walk about, read and write.

“But on the eighth day, I was not a little alarmed. When I went to him in the morning, I found him very much disturbed ; he was yellow all over, and he had almost died in the night from a frightful attack of diarrhœa, brought on by a violent outburst of anger and sorrow over ingratitude and undeserved injury. He was shivering, trembling, and writhing

with pain ; and his feet, which had hitherto been only slightly swollen, were now very much enlarged.

“From this time dropsy set in ; the excretions became scanty, the liver gave clear signs of hard knots, and the jaundice increased. The gentle persuasion of his friends soothed his dangerous agitation, and he forgot all his injuries. But the disease advanced with gigantic strides. In the third week, he had fits of threatened suffocation every night ; it was necessary that the enormous collection of water should have a speedy outlet, and I felt obliged to propose tapping to avert the danger of a rupture. After two or three minutes of earnest reflection, Beethoven agreed to the operation ; and the more readily, because Ritter von Staudenheim, who had been called into the consultation, urged this as an indispensable means. The head surgeon of the General Hospital made the puncture with his accustomed skill ; and when Beethoven saw the stream of water, he exclaimed with pleasure that the operator was like Moses, who struck the rock with his rod, and water gushed out. Relief was soon felt. The fluid weighed 25 lbs. ; but what flowed afterwards, at least five times as much.

“The good that had been done was almost destroyed by imprudently loosening the bandages during the night, with the view probably of allowing the remaining water to escape. Violent inflammation set in, but by carefully keeping the wound dry, the

evil was soon checked. The following three operations were happily without any evil effects.

“Beethoven knew but too well that the paracentesis was only a palliative, and watched with calmness the renewed accumulation of water, knowing that the cold, rainy weather favoured the progress of the complaint, which was caused as much by an affection of the liver of some years’ duration as by organic abdominal disease.

“It is remarkable that, even after very successful operations, Beethoven would suffer no medicament, however gently applied.<sup>1</sup> His appetite declined daily, and the diminution of the juices of the body caused a rapid loss of strength. Then Dr. Malfatti, an old friend of Beethoven, and who henceforth aided me with his advice, knowing his patient’s inclination for spirituous drinks, ordered iced-punch. I must confess that this treatment was successful for a few days, at any rate. Beethoven was so much refreshed that he slept tranquilly the first night, and perspired profusely. He was cheerful, and often witty; he dreamed that he had finished his oratorio, *Saul and David*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We shall see that Wawruch administered too many fluid medicaments which thoroughly weakened the patient’s stomach.

<sup>2</sup> After the practical abandonment of Bernardo’s *Triumph of the Cross*, he had in the winter of 1825—6 applied again to his old friend, the poet, Chr. Kuffner, who in the summer of 1826 sent him the first part of this oratorio.

"As might be expected the improvement did not last long. He soon began to misuse the order, and take the punch too freely. The alcohol caused a rush of blood to the head, he became soporific, and gurgled like a drunken man ; he talked wildly, and the inflammation in his throat made his voice hoarse and almost unintelligible. He grew increasingly violent, and as cholic and diarrhoea returned, it was high time to alter the treatment.

"Thus passed the months of January, February, and March. Beethoven grew more and more emaciated, and his strength visibly declined. After the fourth operation, he prognosticated his speedy death, and he was not mistaken. He would accept no consolation ; and when I tried to encourage him with the hope that the approaching spring would restore him, he replied with a smile, 'My work is done ; if any doctor can cure me now, "his name shall be called wonderful."' This melancholy allusion to Handel's *Messiah* affected me deeply, for I could but feel its appropriateness.<sup>1</sup>

"The fatal day drew nearer and nearer. My duty as a friend and a physician compelled me to warn the sufferer of its approach, that he might fulfil his obligations as a man and a Christian. I informed him

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<sup>1</sup> As Beethoven did not speak English, he could only have pointed to the passage in the copy of Handel's works sent him by Stumpff, and which he read with much pleasure in his last illness. But the incident remains doubtful.



of it as gently as I could by writing, which had always been our only mode of communication.<sup>1</sup> Beethoven read the words slowly, thoughtfully, with perfect calmness, and a radiant expression of countenance ; pressing my hand warmly and solemnly, he said, 'Call the priest.' After a little silent reflection, he said to me, with a kind look, 'I will see you again presently.' Beethoven shortly after performed his devotions with pious resignation and confidence about the future, saying to the friends who surrounded him, 'Plaudite amici, finita est commœdia !' <sup>2</sup>

"In a few hours he lost consciousness, and fell into a coma, with rattling in the throat. The following morning he exhibited every symptom of approaching dissolution. This was the 26th March—a wild, tempestuous day. About six o'clock in the evening, in the midst of a storm of snow, thunder and lightning, Beethoven died. Would not a Roman augur have seen his apotheosis in this commotion among the elements?"

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<sup>1</sup> We know what the "friend" and the "always" mean ; he only knew Beethoven from the time of his last illness.

<sup>2</sup> Of this we shall presently hear fuller particulars.



## CHAPTER XLI.

### *THE LAST DAYS.*



THE following letters, with the exception of one to Schott, were all written to Moscheles who was then living in London, and who himself gave them to me in 1867 to make use of in the biography of Beethoven. Meanwhile, they have been published in the "Life of Moscheles" by his wife. They were occasioned by the gift sent to the suffering master by the London Philharmonic Society, *à conto* of the approaching concert; and in conjunction with Breuning's narrative, they sufficiently explain themselves. We have only to observe that Rau, who negotiated the transmission of the money, was tutor in the banking house of Eskeles.

"Dear Friend,—

"After a very severe attack of inflammation of the eyes, which kept me closely confined to my room for three weeks, I am, thank God, once more so far recovered that I can take up my pen, though writing is an

effort. Make a guess at anything you can't read, and don't be hard upon me where you think me illegible.

"Your letter, with the £100 sent to Beethoven, came safely to hand. It gave us rare and unexpected pleasure. The great man, whom all Europe justly delights to honour—the noble-hearted Beethoven—lies here in Vienna on his bed of sickness. He is in dire distress, and, although alive, still in imminent danger; yet this news we must receive from London! There it is that his high-minded friends eagerly try to soothe his affliction, alleviate his wants, and save him from despair.<sup>1</sup>

"I went at once to his house, that I might satisfy myself about his condition, and inform him of the help at hand.

"It was heart-breaking to see him clasping his hands, and almost shedding tears of joy and gratitude. You, his noble-hearted benefactors, would have been rewarded and delighted to witness a scene so deeply touching.

"I found poor Beethoven in the most wretched condition, more like a skeleton than a living being.

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<sup>1</sup> On the margin of the original letter we find the following remark in Moscheles's handwriting:—"I have, however, several proofs of the interest and sympathy called forth in Vienna at that time by Beethoven's dangerous illness. It is clear that several of his worshippers were eager to offer him help and consolation if they could only get at him. Access to Beethoven, or those nearest to him, owing to his life of isolation, was, however, a difficult matter."

He was in the last stage of dropsy, and it has been necessary to tap him four or five times. His medical attendant is Doctor Malfatti, so he is in excellent hands, but Malfatti gives him little hope. It is impossible to say for certain how long his present state will continue, or if recovery may yet be possible; but the recent news of the help afforded him has worked a remarkable change. The emotion of joy was so excessive as to rupture, in the course of the night, one of the punctured wounds that had cicatrized over; the water which had accumulated for fourteen days flowed away in streams. I found him on my visit next day remarkably cheerful, and feeling a wonderful sense of relief. I hurried off to Malfatti's to tell him of this occurrence, which he considers a very favourable one. They intend to apply a hollow probe for some time, so as to keep his wound open and allow the water to escape freely. May God bless these means!

"Beethoven is satisfied with the attendance and services of his cook and housemaid. His and our friend, the well known and worthy Schindler, dines daily with him, and manages for him in a very friendly honest way. He also looks after Beethoven's correspondence, and controls as far as possible the expenditure of the household. I enclose in my letter, dear friend, Beethoven's receipts for the 1000 florins presented to him. When I proposed to him to take only 500 florins at first, and leave the remaining 500 in the

safe custody of Baron von Eskeles, until he wanted them, he confessed candidly to me that the 1000 florins came to him like a perfect God-send, for he was actually in the painful condition of being forced to borrow money. This being so, I yielded to his earnest entreaty, and handed him over the whole sum of £100 or 1000 florins.

"Beethoven will tell you, in his own letter, how he intends to show his gratitude to the Philharmonic Society. If, in the course of events, you wish to be useful to him, and I can give you a helping hand, you may rely on my hearty and zealous co-operation. The whole of the Eskeles family desire their kind remembrances to you, your wife and little son, and in these I join.

"Your sincere friend,

"RAU.

"Vienna, March 26th, 1827."

"Dear Friend,—

"Beethoven is no more. He expired on the evening of the 26th of March, between five and six o'clock, after a painful struggle and terrible suffering. On the day before he died, all consciousness had completely gone.<sup>1</sup>

"I must say a word about the property he has left behind him. In my last letter, I told you that Beet-

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<sup>1</sup> This is incorrect, for Schindler, who was with him most of the time, expressly says, in the following letter, "almost constantly *in delirio*."

hoven, according to his own statement, was absolutely without money or resources, consequently in the greatest need; and yet, when an inventory of his things was taken in my presence, we found in an old, half-mouldy box seven bank shares. Whether Beethoven purposely concealed them (for he was very mistrustful, and looked hopefully for a speedy recovery), or whether their possession had escaped his own memory, is a problem I cannot venture to solve.<sup>1</sup>

“The 1000 florins sent over by the Philharmonic Society were found still untouched. I laid claim to the money, in conformity with your instructions, and was obliged to deposit it with the magistrate, until further notice from the Philharmonic Society. I would not consent to the funeral expenses being paid out of this money, without being authorized by the society so to act. Should you have it in your power to dispose of any part of the money, pray let it be done in favour of the two poor servants who nursed the sufferer with endless patience and devotion. There is not a syllable about them in the will. Everything goes to the sole heir, Beethoven's nephew. As to the present which Beethoven intended sending to the Philharmonic Society, Herr Schindler will communicate with you in due time.

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<sup>1</sup> The money had for some years been expressly put aside for his nephew, and was, therefore, to Beethoven practically useless.

Let me know soon, and definitely, what steps I am to take, and you may rely on me for strictly carrying out your intentions. Beethoven will be buried on the 29th of this month.

“An invitation has been sent to all artists, members of the different orchestras and theatres. Twenty musicians and composers will act as torch-bearers at the grave. Indeed, everything which can be done to render the solemnity worthy of the deceased seems to be in preparation. The family of Eskeles joins me in kindest remembrances to you and yours.

“Your friend,

“RAU.”

“Vienna, April 4th, 1827.

“My dear Friend,—

I find myself induced to write to you once more, and thus to insure the safety of the letter I enclose for Sir G. Smart. It contains Beethoven's last expression of thanks to Smart, Stumpff, the Philharmonic Society, and to the whole English nation. Beethoven, during the last moments of his life, urged me most earnestly to carry out his wishes about this letter. Let me entreat you, therefore, to give Sir G. Smart the letter as soon as possible. Mr. Levisay, of the English Embassy, has had the kindness to translate it into English.

“On the 26th March, at a quarter to six o'clock in the evening, during a heavy thunderstorm, our im-



mortal friend breathed his last. From the evening of the 24th until he died, he was almost constantly in a delirious state ; but whenever he had a moment of relief, he remembered the kindness shown him by the Philharmonic Society, and praised the constant friendliness of the English nation.

“ His sufferings are not to be described, especially from the moment when the wound gave way, occasioning a fearful drain on the system.

“ His deathbed was remarkable for the magnanimity and Socratic wisdom with which he prepared to meet his doom. I shall probably publish an account of his death ; it would be of rare value to his biographers.

“ Beethoven's funeral was, as in justice it should be, that of a great man. Some 30,000 persons crowded on the glacis, and surged through the streets where the procession was to pass. I cannot describe the scene. If you remember the fête in the Prater, on the occasion of the Congress in the year 1814, you will have some idea of it. Eight Kapellmeisters were pall-bearers, amongst them Eybler, Weigl, Gyrowetz, Hummel, Seyfried, etc. There were six-and-thirty torch-bearers, amongst them Grillparzer, Castelli, Haslinger, Steiner, etc.

“ Yesterday Mozart's Requiem was performed as a commemorative service in the St. Augustine Church. The church, though a large one, could not contain the crowd that thronged there. Lablache sang the

bass part. The leading publishers of Vienna suggested this service.

“ You have Beethoven’s last letter, that of the 18th of March, and Schott in Mainz has his last signature. With regard to his personalty, seven bank shares and several hundred gulden have been found ; and now the Viennese talk and write about Beethoven’s having had no need of aid from a foreign nation, without reflecting that Beethoven, old and powerless at the age of 56, could not make the same claims as if he had been a man of 70. If he had ceased working for years, as the doctors told him he must, he would certainly have been forced to sell one share after the other ; and for how many years, think you, could he have lived on the proceeds of these shares, without falling into the greatest distress ? In short, dear friend, I and Herr Hofrath von Breuning beg of you earnestly, in the event of such monstrous reports reaching England, to appease the manes of Beethoven, by publishing in one of the most largely circulated German newspapers, such as the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, the letters that you have of Beethoven’s upon the subject. The Philharmonic Society might do this on its own account, and thus silence these scribblers at once.

“ The Philharmonic Society has the honour of having defrayed the expenses of the great man’s funeral ; without their help, this certainly could not have been done in a suitable manner.

“The universal cry was, ‘What a shame for Austria! This musn’t go further, for everybody will contribute his share!’—but with this outcry the matter ended. The Musik-Verein determined, the day after the funeral, to have a requiem performed in Beethoven’s memory, and that was all. But we people of the Kärntnerther intend to get up a grand concert in April, and raise a sum for a handsome monument.

“I have further to inform you that the sexton of Währing, where Beethoven lies buried, was with us yesterday, and showed us a letter in which he was offered 1000 florins, if he would deposit Beethoven’s head at a certain spot. This stirred the police to active enquiries. The funeral cost a trifle over 300 florins; our friend Rau will have written to you about it. Should the Philharmonic Society wish to leave the rest of the money here, allowing me, for instance, to appropriate a small sum to my own use, I should regard it as a legacy from my friend Beethoven. I don’t possess the smallest trifle to remind me of him, and in this respect I fare the same as others, for his death was a surprise to him and to all of us around him.

“Do write me a few lines, and say if you have received the letters of the 22nd February, the 14th and the 18th of March, and let me know, too, if Sir G. Smart has also had his. Beethoven’s relations, when his death was imminent, behaved in the meanest way; he was still breathing, when his brother came and wanted to carry off everything, even the 1000

florins sent from London, but we turned him out of doors. Such were the scenes enacted by the side of Beethoven's deathbed. Call the attention of the Philharmonic Society to the gold medal of Louis XVIII. (for the *Missa Solennis*), it weighs 50 ducats, and would be a noble reminder of that great man. Adieu.

"A. SCHINDLER."

"Vienna, April 11th, 1827.

"My dear Friend,—

You will be shocked at the quantity and length of my letters; but read, and believe if you can! To save your own honour, that of our friend Beethoven, and of the Philharmonic Society, there was nothing left to us but to put you in possession of every detail. You heard in my last letter that there is a great deal of talk, as well as public comment, on the generous conduct of the society. But the *Allgemeine Zeitung* contains an article of the most offensive character to everyone, so much so, indeed, that we have thought it our duty to answer it through Hofrath Breuning, who undertook to write the enclosed truthful account, which Pilat will send this very day to the editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*.<sup>1</sup> Although you have never seen the original article in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*,

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<sup>1</sup> Metternich's well-known favourite, Pilat, was editor of the *Oesterreichischen Beobachter*. To the articles mentioned we shall presently refer.

on reading our answer you will at once guess its object and general purport. What you and Smart have further to do is to publish in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* your letters as well, so that these wretched scribblers may be thoroughly humiliated. Rau and Pilat think our article too courteous ; but neither Breuning nor I dare to come out with the whole truth, although we should like to do so, and think the disclosure due to the world. Apart from the fact of my having already, as Beethoven's friend and champion, made myself many enemies, I think it would be base conduct, were I to remain silent when his memory is slandered—now that he is dead and buried—and his well intentioned friends are publicly attacked, and their generous efforts misinterpreted.

“I wrote to you lately that the Philharmonic Society should enter the lists by publishing in its own name the letters to yourself and Smart ; we are all of this opinion. The Philharmonic Society should state what is perfectly well known in London, that Beethoven, after his first concert in the Kärntnerthor Theatre two years ago, on deducting all expenses, which came to a 1000 florins, and paying the managers for the hire of the theatre, had only 300 florins of clear profit, not a single subscriber paying a farthing for his box ; not even did the court appear at the concert, although Beethoven, by my advice, gave a personal invitation to every member

of the royal household. Every one promised to come, and not only in every instance failed to redeem that promise, but never sent Beethoven the smallest contribution, a present of some sort being the invariable rule, even at the benefits of ordinary concert givers.

“At his second concert, given at the Redoutensaal in the same month, the committee, who undertook the management on their own account, were obliged to pay 300 florins out of their own pockets ; and I had the greatest difficulty in preventing Beethoven from making up the deficit out of the 500 florins guaranteed to him for his services on the occasion. It gave him the greatest pain to feel that the committee lost money on his account.

“When the subscription was started for his last Grand Mass, not a soul at Vienna, no, not even the court would subscribe ; and there were other countless insults and humiliations that poor Beethoven was obliged to endure. Now is the best opportunity of making all these things known. All Vienna knew that Beethoven had been lying on a sick-bed for two or three months, and no one took the trouble to inquire into his state of health and circumstances. With such sad experiences of Vienna, could he be expected to look for help here ? I declare to heaven that had not the Philharmonic Society, by its generosity, aroused the Viennese from their inaction, Beethoven would have died and been buried

like Haydn, who was followed to the grave by fifteen persons.<sup>1</sup>

“As to the concert to be given by the collected forces of our theatre for raising a monument, matters stand thus: *Norma*, which was to have been given after Easter, has been fixed for this week, so we lose our evening by this extra opera night. An afternoon concert Weigl thinks unfavourably of, and proposes its postponement until next autumn. But by that time, what little zeal there is will have completely cooled, and no one will think of doing anything more in the matter.

“I cannot help telling you about the conduct of the medical men. At the very beginning of his illness, Beethoven asked the doctors he had formerly consulted to attend him. Dr. Braunhofer excused himself on the plea of his being too far from the house. Dr. Staudenheim, after three days' solicitation, came at last, and retired after one professional visit.<sup>2</sup> The consequence of this was that Beethoven had to trust himself to the care of a professor in the General Hospital, whose services he obtained in a very singular way. Gehringer, the proprietor of a coffee-house in the Kohlmarkt, happened to have a sick servant whom he wished to place under the care of this

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<sup>1</sup> Haydn's death and funeral took place during the second occupation of Vienna by Napoleon, a circumstance which diverted public attention from the great master. But Schindler's statement is exaggerated.

<sup>2</sup> This is a mistake. Staudenheim did not come at all when first sent for.



practitioner. He therefore wrote to Professor Wawruch, asking him to receive the patient, and requesting him, at the same time, to visit Beethoven, who was in want of medical aid. Considerable time elapsed before I ascertained that Beethoven's amiable nephew, Karl, whilst playing one day at billiards in this coffee-house, entrusted the proprietor with this commission. The professor knew neither Beethoven nor his constitution, treated him in his regular routine fashion, prescribing for him, during the first four weeks of his illness, seventy-two bottles of medicine, often three different sorts in one day, so that, as early as the 1st day of January, the patient was more dead than alive. At last I could not look any longer on this gross mismanagement, and went off straight to Dr. Malfatti, formerly Beethoven's friend. He required a great deal of persuasion, and when Beethoven himself implored him most earnestly, at the first consultation, to attend him professionally, Malfatti replied he could not, out of respect for the other doctor, and came at most once or twice a week to the consultation. During the last week, however, he came daily. In short, to you I can and will say it, Beethoven might have lived ten years longer, had he not been sacrificed to the most contemptible meanness and ignorance of others. All these matters will be more fully explained at a later period.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to find proof for this accusation made in the bitterness of bereavement. Beethoven's constitution had, as we have seen, been long undermined and incurably diseased.

"Hummel went back to Weimar on the 9th. His wife and his pupil, a Mr. Hiller, from Frankfort, were with him here. The latter sends you his kind remembrances, and so does Hummel. The expenses of the funeral are now nearly settled, and amount to 330 florins.

"I might tell you a great deal more, but I must conclude. Our friend, Lewinger, sends both of you his kind remembrances. He is so kind as to send this letter by Rothschild. Rau also deserves to be remembered. Write to us soon. Say everything that is kind for me to Herr Stumpff, and tell him that it was Beethoven's intention to dedicate to him one of his newest works. This shall be done, if we can only find some one work that is completed. A kind farewell from

"Your old friend,

"SCHINDLER."

The following letter by Schindler appeared in the *Cäcilia*, for May, 1827. It took the place of an obituary notice. The publishers of this journal were the publishers also of the Grand Mass, the Ninth Symphony, and the Quartets, Op. 127 and 131; and it was the mass which caused Schindler to revert to the last act of consciousness of our master's life, the partaking of the sacrament. Schindler writes from Vienna, April 12, 1827—

"I would gladly have taken the liberty before now of sending you, in Beethoven's name, the enclosed

document, which on his death-bed he commissioned me to deliver ; but I had such a pressure of business after our friend's death that this has hitherto been impossible. We were, unfortunately, unable to make this a legal document, as to do so Beethoven's signature would have been required in the court, and that was altogether out of the question. However, Beethoven asked Hofrath von Breuning and myself to act as witnesses, so the paper will, we think, answer the desired purpose. I beg you to observe that the signature of this document is the last thing Beethoven wrote.

“ I cannot refrain from telling you something about his last hours of consciousness (that is from early in the morning of March 24th, till about 1 o'clock in the after-noon), as you, Sirs, I know, cannot fail to be interested in the matter.

“ When I went to him on the morning of March 24th, I found him very much changed, and so weak that it was with the utmost effort that he uttered two or three words intelligibly. Dr. Wawruch, the medical man in attendance, soon arrived, and after looking at him for some moments, he said to me, ‘ Beethoven is dying rapidly!’ As we had some days previously concluded as well as we could all arrangements about his will, all we desired was that he should make his peace with heaven, and thus show the world that he died a true Christian. The doctor wrote, requesting him in the name of all his friends to receive the Last

Sacrament. He answered calmly and composedly, 'I will.' Dr. Wawruch then went away, leaving me to arrange for this. Beethoven then said to me, 'I want you to write to Schott, and send him the document which he will require. Write in my name, as I am too weak to do it myself, and beg him to send the wine that was promised. If you have time to-day, will you also write to England?'

"The priest came about 12, and his ministrations were very edifying. Beethoven seemed then himself to realise his approaching end, for scarcely had the minister left the room when he said to young Herr von Breuning (son of the Hofrath) and myself, 'Plaudite amici, comœdia est finita. Did I not always say that it would be so?' Then he asked me again not to forget Schott, and to write once more to the Philharmonic Society, thanking them in his name for their munificent gift, and adding that they had cheered his last days, and that at the brink of death he thanked the Society and the English nation, and prayed that God would bless them!

"At that moment, Herr Hofrath von Breuning's office servant came into the room with the case of wine which you sent. It was now about a quarter to 1 o'clock. I placed the two bottles of Rudesheim and the two other bottles with the potion on the table by his bed. He looked at them and said, 'What a pity! what a pity!—too late.' These were his last words. He immediately afterwards fell into

an agony which prevented him from uttering a syllable.

"Towards evening he lost consciousness, and his mind began to wander. This lasted till the evening of the 25th, when signs of death were unmistakeably visible. But he did not cease to breathe till a quarter to six in the evening of the 26th.

"The death struggle was fearful to behold, for the strength of his constitution, especially of his chest, was enormous. He partook of your Rudesheim by teaspoonfulls until the end. I thus send you a brief account of the last days of our never-to-be-forgotten friend."





## CHAPTER XLII.

### *THE LAST MOMENTS.*



UNTIL recently we knew nothing about the last moments of Beethoven's life, except that the composer, Anselm Hüttenbrenner, "closed his eyes," that excellent man having hurried to Vienna from his native place, Gratz, as soon as he heard of Beethoven's fatal illness, that he might see the beloved master once again. We owe his description of this meeting to that diligent researcher of records of Beethoven, A. W. Thayer. Hüttenbrenner was originally intended for the cloister, but had abandoned it because of his love for music ; he could, moreover, in a measure call himself a pupil of Beethoven, as the latter had in early years looked through many of his compositions. After Hüttenbrenner's death, the *Gratz Tagespost*, for October 23rd, 1868, contained the following—

"We have received the following communication from Herr Hauptmann Peter Hüttenbrenner, son of

the celebrated composer, Anselm Hüttenbrenner :—  
‘I have made a highly important discovery among my father’s papers, in the shape of a letter to the Consul of the United States, Alex. W. Thayer, concerning the last moments of Beethoven’s life. The letter is a copy, and although it states that the said consul was the only person to whom these details were communicated, I do not think I commit any indiscretion, now that my father is dead, in publishing the real facts about a matter which has been so variously interpreted in the musical world. This is the letter—

“ ‘Hallerschloss, Gratz, Aug. 20th, 1860.

“ ‘Your Excellency, very dear and honoured Friend,—

“ ‘Your valuable letter from Vienna, of July 17th, greatly pleased me. Although correspondence is not so easy as it was thirty years ago, and I do not willingly recall melancholy circumstances in which I once took part, I will comply with your wish, and write down what, after an interval of thirty-three years, I, who was an eye-witness, can remember of Beethoven’s last moments. I often thought of writing an account in some newspaper, but never carried out my intentions, for I keep in the background as much as possible, and am very loth to draw attention to myself and my affairs.

“ ‘When I entered Beethoven’s bed-room on March 26th, 1827, about three o’clock in the afternoon, I



found there Herr Hofrath Breuning and his son, Frau van Beethoven (wife of Johann van Beethoven), landowner and apothecary at Linz, and my friend Joseph Teltscher, a portrait painter.

“ ‘Professor Schindler was, I believe, also present. After a while these gentlemen left, with little hope of finding the composer alive when they returned.<sup>1</sup> During Beethoven’s last moments, no one was in the room except Frau van Johann Beethoven and myself. He had been lying unconscious, and struggling with death from 3 till past 5 o’clock, when there came a loud peal of thunder, accompanied by a flash of lightning, which vividly illuminated the room. (Snow was on the ground.) After this unexpected phenomenon, which made a deep impression upon me, Beethoven opened his eyes, raised his right hand, and gazed fixedly upwards for some seconds, with clenched fist, and a solemn threatening expression, as if he would say, ‘I defy you, ye adverse powers! Depart! God is with me.’ Or his appearance may be described as that of a brave general, exclaiming to his fainting troops, ‘Courage, soldiers! Forward! Trust in me! Victory is ours!’

“ ‘His hand dropped, and his eyes were half closed. My right hand supported his head, my left lay on his breast. He gave no sign of life. The spirit of the

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<sup>1</sup> Schindler and Breuning went to the Währinger cemetery to choose a grave for their friend, whose life they now despaired of.

great master had passed from this false world to the kingdom of truth. I closed his half-shut eyes, and kissed his brow, mouth, hands, and eyes. At my request Frau van Beethoven cut a lock of his hair, and gave it me as a sacred memorial of Beethoven's dying hour.

“Deeply agitated, I hastened immediately to the city to communicate the news to Herr Tobias Haslinger, and a few hours after returned to my home at Steiermark.

“Beethoven's personal appearance was repellant rather than attractive; but the lofty spirit which pervaded his creations made a strong, irresistible, and magical impression on the mind of every highly cultivated lover of music. It was impossible not to esteem, love, and admire Beethoven.

“Owing to a request from the wife of the late music publisher, Tobias Haslinger, I may have been the cause of Beethoven having been asked, in the gentlest manner, by Jenger and Mdme. Johann Beethoven, to receive the Holy Communion; but I never entreated him to partake of the Last Sacrament, neither was I present at its dispensation in the forenoon of March 24th, 1827. It is also a pure invention that Beethoven ever said to me, ‘*Plaudite amici, finita est commœdia.*’ Nor to any one else could he have made use of an expression so totally at variance with the modesty of his nature. Mdme. van Beethoven told me that after the administration of the

sacrament on the day of his death, her brother-in-law said to the priest, "Reverend sir, I thank you. You have given me consolation."<sup>1</sup>

" 'I must also express my acknowledgments for the kindness and attention shown me by Herr and Frau Johann van Beethoven and Professor Schindler.

" 'Hoping to see you once again at Gratz, before your return to America,

" 'I remain, with the profoundest esteem,

" 'Your faithful and devoted friend,

" 'ANSELM HUTTENBRENNER, M.P.

" 'P.S.—Pray be content, my dear friend, with what I have thus communicated to you, and you only. These are probably the last words I shall write about musical matters.' "

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<sup>1</sup> The medium through whom these requests were preferred was, as we saw, his physician, Dr. Wawruch, who had been a theologian. It has been seen more than once that Beethoven did actually use the words, "Plaudite amici, finita est comœdia"; but they are not to be referred, as Hüttenbrenner imagined, to that last act of consciousness, which was, on the contrary, "extremely edifying."



## CHAPTER XLIII.

### THE FUNERAL.

**T**HE letters of Rau and Schindler gave us some information about Beethoven's funeral; but it seems desirable that we should be accurately acquainted with the main facts, as they afford a sort of criterion of the esteem and popularity enjoyed by Beethoven in the city of his adoption. Appropriate to this purpose is a letter—hitherto overlooked—which appeared in April, 1827, under the title, "Strange News from Vienna," in the *Abendzeitung*, published in Dresden by Th. Hell (Winkler) and F. Hind, the librettist of the *Freischütz*. The letter says—

"The talented Beethoven is no more. About half-past five in the evening of March 26th, amid a thunderstorm—a most unusual occurrence at this season—his great spirit freed itself from the fetters of earth, and fled to its home. His sufferings in his last days from dropsy were indescribable, and made him

long for death. I say nothing of his achievements as a composer ; his fame is world-wide, and his name will stand beside Mozart's until the end of time. If he now shines as one of the greatest composers, especially of instrumental music, how brilliant will be his renown, when halting time, which he has so far outstripped, has at length arrived at an appreciation of his lofty ideas and artistic combinations ! What is now regarded as hyper-artistic in his last works will appear perfectly clear, when music has reached that standpoint which this great man has already attained. Let us in this place speak only of his circumstances, his last hours, and his imposing funeral, partly for the sake of rectifying mis-statements, and partly to show how Vienna honoured the great man, even in his death.

“It is quite true that Beethoven received £100 from the London Philharmonic Society ; but it is a mistake to suppose that he needed this gift, as the noble donors probably imagined. The art-loving Archduke Rudolph, Cardinal of Olmutz, and the Princes Kinsky and Lobkowitz, gave him, up till the time of his death, a fixed pension of 3500 florins, which, together with the high prices readily paid for his numerous compositions—for he was very industrious—render it impossible that he could have been in want, especially as he remained single all his life. And this is shown, moreover, by what he left : seven

bank-notes, and 2000 florins in cash—about 20,000 florins.<sup>1</sup>

“His nephew, who is a soldier, is his heir. Some scores were found among his papers, on which was written in his own hand that he left them to one of his friends who had rendered him essential services in his latter days, when his deafness had made intercourse with the world troublesome.”<sup>2</sup>

“The day before his death, he exclaimed, with a smile, ‘Plaudite amici, commoedia finita est!’ His body was embalmed.

“As soon as the sad news of the great man’s death became known, all his friends and admirers united to do him honour. Foremost were Messrs. Haslinger, Piringer, Assmayer, and Schindler. Cards of invitation to the funeral were printed and sent out. Haslinger discovered a composition for four trumpets, written by Beethoven at Linz, in 1818 (?). The band-

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<sup>1</sup> The concluding notice from the *Allgemeine Zeitung* will show how that, contrary to the common opinion, Beethoven was in reality on the verge of want. If his honoraria were sometimes larger than those received by other composers, they were not at all proportionate to the value of the works, nor to the time and strength Beethoven spent upon them. It is necessary that this be clearly understood, for hitherto our nation had neither known how to honour, nor how to make allowances for its really great sons. This sounds harsh, and may arouse much opposition, but it is only the simple truth resting on facts. “Beethoven’s Life” gives us a proof of it.

<sup>2</sup> There is no reference elsewhere to this incident, and it is not very likely to be true.

master, Seyfried, arranged the melody for voices, and set to it the words of the *Miserere*, that it might be alternately played and sung during the funeral procession.<sup>1</sup>

“Grillparzer composed an oration to be delivered over the grave by the artist Anschütz. Baron von Schlecta and Castelli wrote poems for distribution at the funeral. Professors and dilettanti in all branches of art pressed forward to pay their last homage to the revered master.

“The day of the funeral arrived. From city and suburbs crowds assembled around the house at the Glacis, where Beethoven had lived. The large courtyard and the square in front were so choked with people, that those who were to take part in the ceremony had the utmost difficulty in getting inside the house, while the road from the house to the church was lined with a crowd numbering at least 20,000.<sup>2</sup>

“While the body was lying in the room, people flocked in to see it; and as they brought scissors with them, and cut off a great deal of his grey hair, the coffin was obliged to be closed as soon as possible,

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<sup>1</sup> The composition consisted of so-called “Equale,” which Beethoven had written while staying with his brother at Linz, in 1812, as a funeral piece for the cathedral bandmaster of that place, Glöggel.

<sup>2</sup> It should be stated that the 29th March, 1827, was a beautiful warm, spring day, and that there was in the procession much to attract the eye and ear of a crowd.



and carried into the courtyard. There the poems were eagerly contested for by the crowd.

"The clergy arrived at half-past three. After a short German hymn, composed by Anselm Weber, had been sung over the coffin by twelve voices, the procession began to move.<sup>1</sup> It was headed by the members of the Grundspital, and the pupils of the Musik Verein; then followed the clergy, four trumpeters and sixteen singers, who alternately performed the above-mentioned *Miserere*. Then came the coffin, borne by six (?) singers of the Royal Opera Theatre; six bandmasters, Messrs. Eybler, Weigl, Hummel, Seyfried, Kreutzer, and Gyrowetz, were the pall-bearers.<sup>2</sup>

"Thirty-six torch bearers walked in a broad line on each side of the coffin, and among them were the most famous artists in Vienna: the singers, Lablache, David, and Monelli; the poets, Grillparzer, Bernard, and Castelli; the professors, Mayseder, Böhm, and Merk. Many outsiders also followed as mourners.

"The procession moved so slowly through the surging crowd of spectators that it took an hour and a-half to go from the house to the church, a distance of some 500 paces. In the church was sung the

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<sup>1</sup> The song was Schiller's "*Rasch tritt der Todt den Menschen an*," and was performed by eight artists from the Kärthnerthor Theatre, who also carried the coffin.

<sup>2</sup> There were eight bandmasters: the two omitted were Gänsbacher and Würfel.

"Libera" from Mozart's *Requiem*, arranged for voices alone.<sup>1</sup> Then the coffin was placed in the hearse, and carried to the churchyard, accompanied by at least 200 carriages. There the crowd was, if possible, still greater. The coffin was taken out, and, after a deeply affecting oration by Auschütz, was lowered into the grave. Herr Hummel threw on it a laurel wreath, and the leaves of two other laurel wreaths were divided among the mourners. Many took earth from the fresh grave to carry home with them. Thus ended a funeral celebration, in which it may be said the hearts of the whole musical world joined. The next day there were solemn masses in the principal churches for the soul of the departed.

"There is a talk of getting up some concerts, the proceeds of which are to be devoted to the erection of a monument to Beethoven, and the body of silversmiths intend casting a medal in his honour. But the great genius is immortal.

"Wer wie er der Zeit ist vorgeeilt  
Den ereilt die Zeit zerstörend nicht."<sup>2</sup>

(Who like him hath distanced time,  
Feels not the arch destroyer's blighting touch.)

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<sup>1</sup> The Libera me ("Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death") was a vocal quartet written by I. von Seyfried, to be used at the performance of Mozart's *Requiem*, and therefore not by Mozart himself.

<sup>2</sup> These are the last lines of a poem on Beethoven's funeral, by Castelli. They were sent to this evening paper, and form part of the complete account.



## CHAPTER XLIV.

### *THE FUNERAL ORATION.*

**A** COLLECTION of contemporary opinions about Beethoven would be incomplete without the oration written by the poet, Grillparzer, and delivered over the grave in the Währing churchyard by the great actor, Anschütz. It is, however, rather a personal recollection than a true picture of the genius and art of our master.

Grillparzer relates how Schindler came to him two days before Beethoven's death, with a request from the composer's friends that he would write the funeral oration. "I was," he says, "the more shocked as I scarcely knew anything about his illness (!) ; but I endeavoured to collect my thoughts, and the next morning began to write. I was not more than half through the oration, when Schindler came to fetch it, as Beethoven had just died. My heart sank within me, my eyes filled with tears, and, as I have often found in work of this kind, when overpowered by

emotion, I could not continue in the same strain in which I had begun."

This is the oration in its original form, as it appears in Grillparzer's "Collected Works"—

"We stand by this grave as the representatives of the whole German people, mourning over the departure of one who was all that remained to us of the glory of our native art, the last blossom of our national genius. The hero of song indeed lives, and long may he live in the German tongue and in German hearts; but the last master of the musical *lied*, the grand exponent of the tone art, the heir to the genius of Handel and Bach, the inheritor of the immortal fame of Haydn and Mozart has passed away, and we stand weeping over the broken chords of the soundless lyre.

"The soundless lyre! So let me speak of him. For he was an artist to the heart's core. Buffeted by the storms of life, as the shipwrecked sailor embraces the shore, so sought he refuge in thy arms, O Art, thou glorious sister of the good and true, thou blessed comforter. Firmly did he cling to thee, and even when the portals through which thou hadst access to him were closed, and he could no longer perceive thy features, he carried thy image in his heart and cherished it till death.

"He was an artist; and who can compare with him? He roamed over the domains of art like Leviathan through the watery deep. He compre-

hended all things, from the gentle cooing of the dove to the mighty rolling of the thunder, from the subtlest science and the most delicate refinements of expression to that dread point where art passes under the lawless sway of the struggling powers of nature. Whoever follows him cannot go beyond him, for he reached the uttermost limits of art.<sup>1</sup>

“Adelaide and Leonora! fête of the heroes of Vittoria, solemn strains of the Mass! ye children of melody! ye rushing symphonies—‘Freude schöner Götterfunken,’ thou Song of the Swan! ye muses of the voice of the lyre,—scatter your laurels around his grave!<sup>2</sup>

“He was an artist; but above all he was a man—a man in the highest sense. Because he secluded himself from the world, he was thought hostile to it; and because he shunned emotion, he was called feelingless. Ah! he who knows himself to be invulnerable does not fly. The finest points are most easily blunted, bent, or broken. Excessive sensibility shrinks from emotion. He fled from the world, because his loving

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<sup>1</sup> That this has not been realised is at once our solace and our boast; for we have had “Bayreuth,” and who will deny that there Beethoven’s spirit lived again?

<sup>2</sup> That Grillparzer should have called the Ninth Symphony the “Song of the Swan” betrays his ignorance. For the stupendous Quartets, Opp. 127, 130, and 132, had already been publicly performed in Vienna, and much talked about. These were followed by the C sharp minor Quartet, Op. 131, and by Op. 135, which was Beethoven’s real swan song.

spirit had no weapons wherewith to withstand it. He separated himself from mankind, when he had given everything and received nothing. He remained alone, because he found no second ego. But, till death, he had a sympathising heart for all humanity, loved those near to him with a fatherly love, devoted his life and genius to the whole world.

“Such was he, so he died, and so he will live for all ages. But ye who have followed us thus far, restrain your tears! Ye have not lost, but gained him. No flesh may cross the threshold of immortality. The body must disappear ere she opens her portals. He whom ye mourn is among the great of all ages, for ever invioable. Therefore, return to your homes, sorrowful, but calm. And when the power of his creations overwhelms you like a flood, and your rapture is shared by generations yet unborn, then remember this hour, and say, ‘We were there when they buried him ; we wept over his grave.’ ”





## CHAPTER XLV.

### THE VINDICATION.



WE are acquainted with the circumstances of Beethoven's request, when on his death-bed, for help from London. In the "Biography," all the reasons for this proceeding were fully discussed. A similar explanation was also given by his friend, Breuning, in the *Augsburg Allgemeine Zeitung*, in 1827. With this article, which is a worthy tribute of friendship, and gives us a final survey of the character and work of our master, we conclude the portrayal by his contemporaries.

The *Augsburg Allgemeine Zeitung*, for April 4th, 1827, wrote as follows—

"Vienna, March 30th.

"The remains of the deeply-lamented Beethoven were interred yesterday evening in the presence of an immense concourse of people. MM. Grillparzer, Castelli, and the entire *personelle* of the Hofbühne and Opera Theatres accompanied the procession to



the church, and thence to the grave, followed by a string of carriages extending further than the eye could reach. The public feel the loss of this great composer most keenly, and were not a little surprised to hear that Herr Moscheles, who must be acquainted with the liberality of the music-loving *Kaiserstadt*, had set on foot a subscription for Beethoven in London. This news awakened universal indignation. The deceased did not need the help, and there was no warrant for thus forestalling a public so devoted to art, and a government so generous in its encouragement of artists. At a single word, thousands would have flown to the aid of Beethoven. They were restrained by respect, and by the fact that he was in the receipt of yearly pensions from His Imperial Highness the Archduke Rudolph, and several families of the nobility. With a government and a public so readily appreciative of all that is good and beautiful, no true Austrian artist need have recourse to the renowned generosity of Great Britain, which Maria von Weber so recently experienced. Beethoven himself would not have dreamt of such a thing."

To this Hofrath von Breuning, with equal faithfulness and friendship, made the following dignified reply, which is at once a vindication and full portrayal of the master's character.

"The *Allgemeine Zeitung*, for April 4th, 1827, No. 94, contains an account of the funeral of Beet-

hoven on March 29th, at which such a profound expression of public sympathy was manifested. The remarks which follow about the gift sent by the London Philharmonic Society to the great composer reduce us to this alternative : either the writer was in ignorance of the circumstances of the case, and should have refrained from writing at all ; or the intention of the observations was to disparage a noble action under the specious excuse of patriotism, because the deed was done by a foreign nation.

“ Nothing so wounds the feeling of right-thinking people as such defamation of generous acts, which are the sole compensation for the baseness and vulgarity which too often degrade human nature.

“ That the Philharmonic Society’s generosity may receive due recognition and acknowledgment, we give a faithful narrative of the facts, which the best friends of the deceased can, if needful, vouch for and substantiate by documents.

“ While possessing lofty musical genius, a great and cultured mind, and rare depth of soul, Beethoven was from a boy perfectly helpless in all economical and financial matters.

“ His household expenditure was, therefore, far heavier than it ought to have been, although he dispensed with most of the comforts, and all the luxuries of life. Through the unhappy loss of what was in his case the noblest of senses, that of hearing, he had for more than ten years completely withdrawn from the world.

“ His expenses were also considerably increased by his nephew, Karl, his brother’s orphan, whom in his loving generosity he had adopted. Various misfortunes had also robbed him, who lived only for his art, of the earlier fruit of his labour.

“ His last severe and fatal illness unexpectedly seized him, when his life-long savings consisted of the presents he had received from several sovereigns for his Grand Mass, at the time of the Congress, and which only amounted to a small sum. Although, by a rise in the funds, his capital had nearly doubled its original value; yet even with the addition of his pension of 1360 florins per annum, it was not sufficient to maintain him for two years in his present style of living, free from anxiety and pinching.

“ Suddenly and forcibly debarred from all work, and bowed down by a painful malady, the prospect of its protraction naturally caused him to regard the future with disquietude; he saw the time approaching when he would be obliged to draw upon what was his last resource. Who, however, will blame his friends for having involuntarily increased his trouble, by keeping from him as long as possible all idea of danger, and insisting on long and careful nursing as a means for his complete recovery.

“ Amid severe suffering and those melancholy forebodings—although, in other respects, he was calm and cheerful—he received from Herr Stumpff in London

a present as valuable as it was acceptable, viz., a complete edition of Handel's works; and as he reflected with emotion on this proof of friendship from a distant land, he began to recall how several years ago the London Philharmonic Society had made the kind and flattering proposal of giving a grand concert for his benefit, which he had at that time declined with many thanks.

"The recollection of this induced him to write thus to Herr Stumpff in London—

" "I have unfortunately been laid up since Dec. 3rd, with dropsy. You can imagine in what a position this places me. I live usually on the proceeds of my brain work, out of which I have to support myself and my Karl. For two months and a half I have not written a note. My stipend will cover the rent and leave a few hundred gulden over. Then, you know, the term of my illness cannot in the least be calculated upon; neither should I be able, directly it was over, to fly through the air on Pegasus. Physician, surgeon, apothecary, all have to be paid. I recollect well that a few years ago the Philharmonic Society offered to give a concert on my behalf. It would be a blessing, would they now renew their proposal; it might, perhaps, save me from all my threatened embarrassments. I have therefore written to Sir G. Smart (music publisher); and if you, my dear friend, can do anything in the matter, I beg you to communicate with him. Moscheles will also be

written to, and I think that by the united efforts of all my friends something will be done for me.'

"Without receiving any further request, without hesitation or inquiry, without waiting to arrange for a concert, the Philharmonic Society at once transmitted through Rothschild's a provisional sum of 1,000 florins, with the promise of a still larger subsidy from the proceeds of a grand concert, which was to be given for the great artist's benefit; this money they delivered to Herr Moscheles, who on March 1st wrote to a friend in Vienna to advise him of it.

"To this statement of the simple facts, we may add that in this letter Herr Moscheles forbade all public mention of the gift, as good deeds should be done in secret. Its publication in Vienna is *only by the express wish of Beethoven*.

"Confiding in these unvarnished facts, we can boldly leave the article from Vienna, referred to in our opening remarks, to the judgment of an impartial public. They certainly will not misinterpret the noble spirit displayed by the Philharmonic Society in their prompt generosity, nor the active and honourable efforts of Herr Moscheles, to whom they will make full amends for the attempts made by the *Augsburg Allgemeine Zeitung* to disparage his friendly sympathy. In this distorted statement, this pretence of universal indignation, when in reality liberal-minded Vienna, ever ready to acknowledge foreign merit, heard with pleasure and interest of

the noble gift from England, we can hardly help seeing an intention of arousing feelings of prejudice and partiality; and in the false show of patriotic sentiment, a mere device to cloak this unworthy aim.

“No one had a higher regard for the active, lofty, and it must be added, practical appreciation of the Government and public for all that is good and beautiful than Beethoven himself, who was, on this account, first attracted to Vienna, and there induced to remain; no one could feel more grateful than he for the assistance received in his artistic career, and especially for the kindness and generosity, first, of His Imperial Highness the Archduke Rudolph, and afterwards of Princes Kinsky and Lobkowitz, in granting him a fixed yearly pension. But his extremely delicate sensibility, which in his last illness imposed upon his oldest and best friends what was to them a painful inaction with regard to his interests, rendered it impossible for him to make known generally his uneasy prospects and feelings; and it was only on the recollection of a kind and honourable offer received some time previously, that he resolved to speak of his difficulties to a brother artist, and then in relation to an art performance. Finally, it is most unjust of this writer, on account of the active and lofty sense which here prevails for the beautiful and the good, to dispute the right of another country to recognize and honour these qualities, and by prompt assistance give practical proof of its appre-

ciation ; as if it were a piece of presumption not to have waited to see what would be done at Vienna, as soon as Beethoven's condition became known.

“Instead of seeking to disparage every noble thought and action, let them receive their due reward.

“The Viennese public have shown their noble-mindedness and benevolence too often to be put into the shade by the generosity of another country, for the exercise of which there was no opportunity here, and cordial recognition will add far more to their own fame than spiteful criticism.”







## CONCLUSION.

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WE have thus beheld the great tone-master, not only in his art, but in the most varying circumstances of his life ; we have passed in review a succession of varied pictures of his nature and character.

The misery and want of his childhood and youth, and the bold confidence with which he rose into the light of art ; his proud triumph as a *virtuoso*, and the inspiring results of his creative efforts ; his severe physical affliction, and the harsh restraints it imposed upon him ; the Titanic courage with which he defied want, and overcame obstacles, and yet the unspeakable yearning and pressing needs of his own heart ; and then the triumph over suffering, the complete and glorious development of his character,—all this has been brought before us in these slight sketches, and this being, whose outward life was so uneventful, has carried us away, and drawn us into the stormy vortex of his own agitated soul.

“Although we have often done little more than touch the hem of his garment, yet have we often

caught a gleam of the inward light which ever warmed and nourished his genius, and a glimpse of his true and lofty spirit which inspired universal admiration and reverence. When, in some happy moment, the veil was lifted for these "contemporaries," and something was revealed of the sublime soaring of his phantasy, his lofty views of man and life, then did we feel raised, as if by some mighty force, into those exalted spheres of musical art, of which it may be truly said, that like a second philosophy, they afford us the deepest insight into life.

If ever to artist was committed the "dignity of mankind," it was given to Beethoven, and preserved by him. The holy earnestness with which he regarded art, and readily sacrificed not only what the world calls happiness, but consecrated his whole nature to her cause, and remained faithful "even unto death"—by this earnestness did he reach the goal of all his efforts : he, in the fullest sense, *restored art to her true dignity*. And if the strange, earnest, tragic life, presented to us even in these slight records, excite our deep interest and sympathy, with what urgency does this life exhort us to preserve and uphold the dignity of art. Thus only do we become the contemporaries and living witnesses of him who, though departed, is not dead, but ever living and working.

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